

HITCHCOCK: THE MIND OF A MASTER

A VISUAL INVESTIGATION OF
NORTH BY NORTHWEST

&

THE WORLD OF FILM

PART V, CHAPTERS 97-120

by

H. Arthur Taussig, Ph.D.

Copyright © – 1999, 2020

Version 1.05

TABLE OF CONTENTS

97. THE CAFETERIA & BACKGROUNDS	1
98. FOREGROUNDS.....	25
99. THORNHILL'S REVENGE	36
100. FOREST MEETING	41
101. ROGER'S ABSENT CLOTHES.....	49
102. ROGER'S RELIGIOUS WOUNDS.....	51
104. NEW CLOTHES	77
105. ESCAPE & RE-REBIRTH.....	78
106. VANDAMM'S HOUSE.....	85
107. THROWING MONEY	87
108. STIGMATA & MATCHBOOKS.....	91
109. TELEVISION & POSING	96
110. THE PUMPKIN.....	104
111. THE MEANINGS OF NAMES	106
112. FEAR OF FALLING	111
113. DANGLING	118
114. BIG FACES & SHOES	123
115. THE MICROFILM.....	131
116. DEUS EX MACHINA	134
117. THE END & ONE MORE JOKE.....	139
118. CONCLUSIONS	144
119. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	146
120. CHRONOLOGY	147
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	149

97. THE CAFETERIA & BACKGROUNDS



North by Northwest [1959] (1:43:57)

And now we have another example of Hitchcock's penchant for outrageous things happening in the most mundane of circumstances: a kidnapping in a public bar, a murder attempt in a cornfield, and now an assassination in a cafeteria filled with tourists.

Vandamm and party arrive and go into the cafeteria while Thornhill (now, after a hiatus, surrounded once again by a sea of red) gets a cup of coffee from the cafeteria line. In the sequence that follows, the physical arrangement of the two men in the cafeteria environment reveals their roles.

We have seen them together many times, but we have never had the opportunity to really compare the two men. Thornhill and Vandamm now sit symmetrically opposite one other at a small table, revealing how similar they really are. Actually, there is a strong resemblance between Cary Grant and James Mason that goes far beyond their mutual British accents. Just as the similarity between Vandamm's sister and Roger's mother, in this similarity Hitchcock again proposes that there is, in fact, very little difference between good and evil. This idea appears in many of Hitchcock's films. For instance,

in *Vertigo* [1958], the obsessive Scottie treats poor Judy as badly as, or even worse, than murdered Elster.

What differences there are, however, are revealed in the backgrounds against which the two men are placed. Thornhill sits before a stone wall (similar to the one he will have to climb to rescue Eve at Vandamm's mountain-top hideaway) visually trapped and enclosed (by the Professor's machinations), while Vandamm sits before windows, indicating he has freedom and the power of movement.

However, what is before them on the table tells a different symbolic story. In front of Thornhill is a cup of coffee he fetched for himself moments before in the cafeteria line. Thus, Roger is nourishing himself (this is the completion of the scene back in New York when his mother asked him if he'd be home for dinner, that is, to be fed by his mother). Coffee also makes people more alert, more awake. And this, too, describes Roger's present state – for the first time in the film he is aware of most of the facts, enough to have made a rational decision and tapped into his better, moral self.

By contrast, Vandamm places before him on the table his darkly ominous black hat. Thus, rather than nourishing himself, he puts his intellect before him, and a black one at that. The two objects are placed on the table so that they visually become (with the help of a very carefully placed camera) the hearts of the two men. This echoes Thornhill's previous "martini as heart" scene in the Oak Room bar back in New York City.

Another observable difference is in their clothing. While they both wear suits of almost identical color (blue gray) and style (notch collar) with white shirts and dark ties, there is a difference. Vandamm wears a sweater under his jacket. He is wearing one layer more than Thornhill, perhaps a symbol of his impenetrability or perhaps he needs more clothing to compensate for his innate coldness. In addition, the sweater-vest is dark green recalling the significance Hitchcock assigned that color at the beginning of the film.



Downhill [1927] (17:28)

Hitchcock used the identical device at the beginning of his career in *Downhill* [1927]. Here stands the hero, Roddy and villain Tim, side-by-side for comparison. In addition to his aggressive body language, Tim wears a sweater.



Young and Innocent [1937] (26:10)

Hitchcock uses a wide variety of symbolic objects in the backgrounds and foregrounds to help define his characters. In *Young and Innocent* [1937], for example, the crossed sabers mounted on the wall behind a dining room table clearly symbolize a family conflict that extends far beyond the conflict between Erica and her constable father.



Sabotage [1936] (16:29)

In *Sabotage* [1936], the enemy conspirators meet in an aquarium – instead of “underground” they meet “underwater” where the film compares the evil plotters with the anti-deluvian life forms swimming aimlessly about in depressing captivity.



The Lodger [1927] (20:23)

Fires appear symbolically in several backgrounds, almost always with the same meaning: passion. In *The Lodger* [1927], the eponymous lodger stokes a fire, but at this point in the film we are not sure if the passion is for Daisy or it is a murderous passion rising in him.



The Farmer's Wife [1928] (1:57:42)

Hitchcock uses a fire to symbolize the new-found passion between Samuel and Minta in *The Farmer's Wife* [1928].



The Manxman [1929] (58:18)

He repeats the trope in *The Manxman* [1929] where Pete's love for Kate is illustrated by the fire behind them. When he lays his head in her lap, the flames and smoke seem to be leaping from his body.



Rebecca [1940] (1:44:04)

In *Rebecca* [1940], Mr. & Mrs. de Winter kiss passionately before a blazing fire.



To Catch a Thief [1955] (1:08:16)

Similarly in *To Catch a Thief* [1955], Hitchcock intercuts a long (too long for the censors of the day), passionate kiss with exploding fireworks outside the window. In a clever move to satisfy the censors' arbitrary rule that no kiss can last longer than three seconds, Hitchcock steps up the passion to almost orgasmic proportions.



Lifeboat [1944] (57:55)

Water, like the primary element of fire, can be used to symbolize passion. We see a passionate and stormy kiss in the midst of a storm at sea in *Lifeboat* [1944].



Vertigo [1958] (1:08:19)

In *Vertigo* [1958], Scottie and Madeline kiss against crashing waves with thunderous pounding music on the soundtrack.



Shadow of a Doubt [1943] (03:24)

But Hitchcock's vocabulary of objects to which he assigns symbolic meaning goes far beyond just fire and water. In *Shadow of a Doubt* [1943], the very carefully chosen and placed bed frame presents us with iron circles and spirals seemingly rising out of Uncle Charlie's head. Also seeming to rise out of his head is a dark lamp. Clearly these warn us of Uncle Charlie's mental state long before there is any evidence of his derangement in the plot.



Shadow of a Doubt [1943] (39:52)

And later in Santa Rosa, a bed frame forms what appears to be the black wings of an angel of death attached to Charlie's back.



I Confess [1953] (43:57)

Hitchcock uses a strikingly similar image in *I Confess* [1953] when Ruth is about to confess a loveless marriage and her forbidden love for a priest.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (1:54:59)



Apollo – El Djem, Tunisia

Hitchcock achieves just the opposite effect in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956]. Jo McKenna just discovered that her kidnapped son is upstairs by his whistling along with the song she is singing. The settee behind her forms gold wings and the pink flowers veritably explode from her head. The similarity to a 2nd century Roman floor mosaic of Apollo in El Djem, Tunisia is striking.



Suspicion [1941] (55:41)

In *Suspicion* [1941], when Johnnie and Lina stop to admire the scenery, Hitchcock places a pair of sheep in the background, perhaps to represent the loving couple, perhaps to represent “sheep to the slaughter,” for this is where Lina begins to suspect Johnnie’s nefarious plans may include murder.



Under Capricorn [1949] (08:55)

In his melodrama *Under Capricorn* [1949], Adaire and Flusky are walking along a street planning a shady land deal. Unbeknownst to each other, there are shootings and murder in both their pasts. This is well illustrated in the poster behind them.



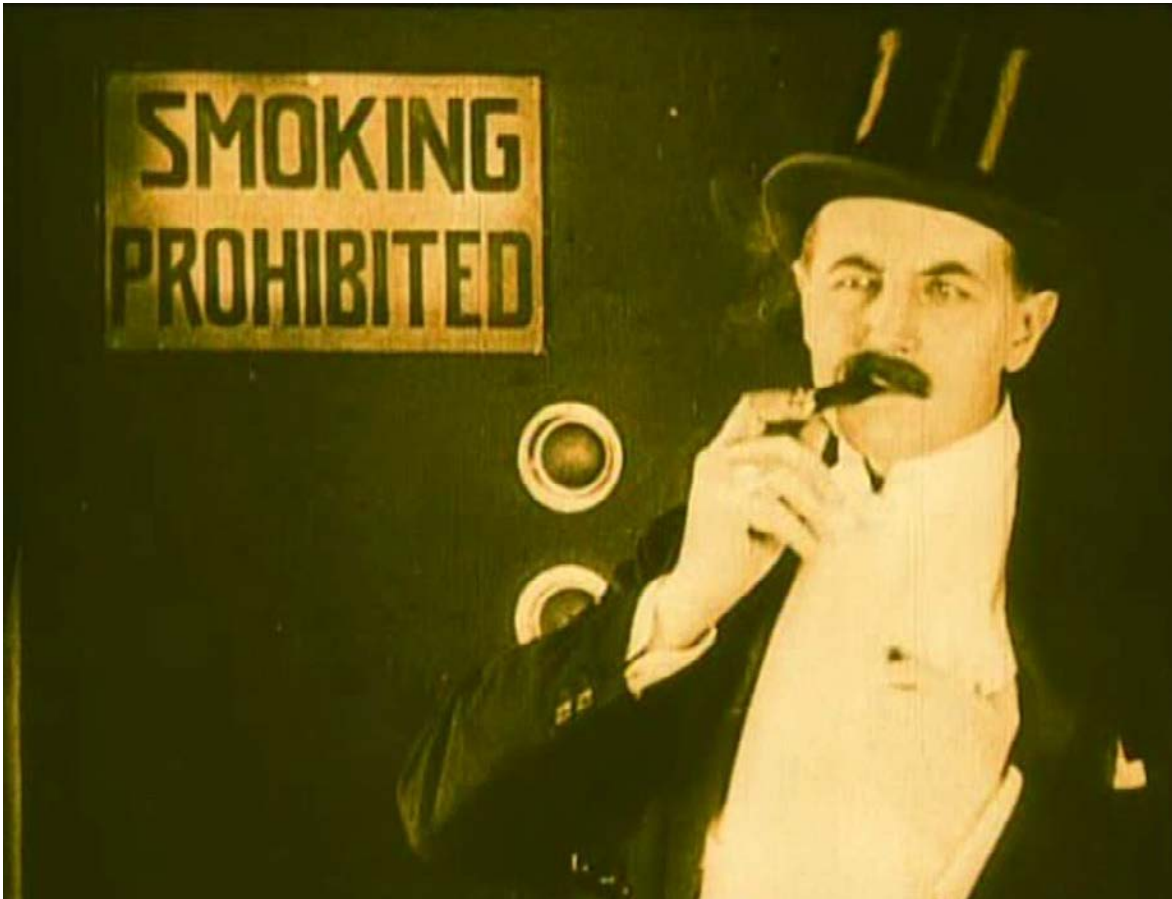
The Wrong Man [1956] (30:44)

Another fine example of Hitchcock's use of background material to comment on the action is in *The Wrong Man* [1956]. Innocent Manny is accused of having robbed an insurance company. He is told several people have identified him. When he protests, Hitchcock photographs him so a previously unremarkable extension cord in the background is now positioned to almost form a noose behind him.



Marnie [1964] (1:51:52)

In *Marnie* [1964], Hitchcock photographs Marnie descending stairs. He places his camera so the bannister turns into a whirlpool sucking her downward – clearly illustrative of her psychological journey.



The Pleasure Garden [1925] (02:45)

Not only objects are carefully placed in the background to comment on what is happening in the film, but also words. A few moments into his first film as director, *The Pleasure Garden* [1925], Hitchcock develops the personality of the stage show manager, Mr. Hamilton, by simply showing him smoking a big cigar before a “Smoking Prohibited” sign.



Blackmail [1929] (38:49)

In 1929, Alice just killed her would be rapist in *Blackmail* [1929] and is overwhelmed by guilt. Walking trance-like through the streets, she passes under an ironic sign, “A New Comedy.”



Sabotage [1936] (1:09:33)

In *Sabotage* [1936], when policeman Ted Spencer insists on covering up the murder committed by Mrs. Verloc, his new love interest, Hitchcock ironically puts the word “health” just behind them.



The Wrong Man [1956] (1:02:47)

In *The Wrong Man* [1956], during an interview with a lawyer, Hitchcock carefully places the word “GORE” in the background behind Manny, I presume to raise the general level of dread permeating the whole film. This is clearly intentional because, first this is a set on a sound stage carefully built to Hitchcock’s specifications, and, second, the letters he intends us to read are much darker than the rest of the words, “Goren Shops.”



Vertigo [1958] (1:35:22)

Two years later in *Vertigo* [1958], Hitchcock uses a variation on this device: Scottie follows Judy to her hotel. She goes to her room and opens her hotel room window. Next to her the words “Empire Hotel” have been cropped to “pire,” as in a funeral pyre.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (1:08:15)

Never sticking to an easy formula, Hitchcock is not above a bit of humor in the midst of tension. Hitchcock uses a background object to a very different purpose in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956]. Dr. McKenna stupidly blunders into a taxidermist's shop and accuses the owner of political intrigue. Almost every light throughout the shop is lit, except the one just behind Dr. McKenna – clearly Dr. McKenna, a dim bulb, has no idea what is going on.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (1:22:52)

In the same film, after Jo calls the police and sets off single-handedly to save her son's life – a “life-saving” mission – she is shown leaving a phone booth with an advertisement for Lifesavers candy in the background.

98. FOREGROUNDS

Hitchcock uses foregrounds as much as backgrounds to set moods and give symbolic information. A few examples:



Bon Voyage [1944] (10:52)

In his short propaganda film of 1944, *Bon Voyage*, the complex central character holds a newspaper before him cleverly arranged so that a crossword puzzle appears in the center of the screen. The character is a Gestapo agent posing as an escape POW in order to penetrate the French Resistance.



The Paradine Case [1947] (31:42)

In *The Paradine Case* [1947], lawyer Keane's world is disintegrating because of his infatuation with a murderess. Arriving home, Hitchcock photographs him through an ornate bannister of descending spirals that clearly expresses his confusion and the convoluted circumstances he finds himself in.



I Confess [1953] (47:37)

In *I Confess* [1953], Hitchcock uses a symbolic staircase again. Ruth is about to descend the twistiest staircase imaginable into a twisted world of love, frustration, blackmail, and murder. For priest Michael Logan, the post behind him, parallel to his spine, symbolizes his future as upright, brave, and rather stiff.



I Confess [1953] (1:08:34)

And later in the same film, Father Logan walks, a tiny figure in the background. In the foreground looms a gigantic statue of Jesus bearing a cross and being persecuted by Roman soldiers. Burdened by another man's sin and by knowing who the murderer is but unable to tell anyone because of the rules of confession, and about to be arrested by the police and taken into custody, the allusion is unmistakable: Father Logan, like Jesus, is on his way to trial and crucifixion.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (28:21)

In *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956], Hitchcock photographs the mysterious spy Louis Bernard through a screen of spirals and twists.



Double Indemnity [1944] (7:24) – Billy Wilder

The use of the curlicue grill is reminiscent of Billy Wilder's rather naughtier use of a similar grill in *Double Indemnity* [1944]. This is the first view Walter Neff has of Phyllis Dietrichson; the placement of the grill indicates rather clearly what Walter has on his mind.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (1:14:40)

Later in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956], an extinguished ceiling light fixture is placed so low as to partially obscure the heads! In addition to casting an ominous shadow on the assassin's face, an electrical cord dangles from the light fixture to plug in a record player to demonstrate the means of killing a diplomat. At the level of symbolism, it shows how “twisted” are the plans of the kidnappers/assassins. In addition, we have the symbolic irony of a lamp casting a shadow on the villain's face.



The Wrong Man [1956] (47:31)

In *The Wrong Man* [1956], no one listens to Manny's protestations of innocence. He has, essentially, lost his voice. During a lineup interrogation, Hitchcock uses a foreground microphone to ironically stress this. Needless to say, much of the film has prison-like bars in the background and the foreground, often in double layers.



The Wrong Man [1956] (1:24:46)

And later in the same film, when Manny leaves the mental institution where he just committed his wife, Hitchcock films him through some bare, winter branches. Cleverly, Hitchcock placed these on the side of the frame through which Manny must pass, the branches symbolizing the web Manny is about to enter – the result of an innocent man found guilty.



Vertigo [1958] (1:42:58)

In *Vertigo* [1958], while Judy is writing a letter to Scotty detailing how he has been duped into being an accessory to murder, Hitchcock moves the camera so that a lamp passes over and partially obscures Judy's face. The lamp implies illumination – we finally learn what is going on. However, while Judy's face is lit, the light is not coming from the lamp, the lamp that would normally be illuminating the note. This lack of light predicts the blindness of the various characters involved and darkness that will soon envelope them all.



Vertigo [1958] (58:55)

Hitchcock even manages a bit of cross-cultural sarcasm in his foregrounds in the same film. Scottie and Madeleine meet behind a bannister decorated with the Chinese character *shuāngxǐ* most popularly translated as “double happiness.” It is often associated with weddings. The sarcasm is pushed even further by the “red, white, and blue” color composition.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (1:07:29)

On a lighter note in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956], Hitchcock places a stuffed tiger in the foreground. This adds a note of dread to the image, placed next to the man Dr. McKenna suspects of kidnapping his son. But it also adds a bit of surreal humor, echoing as it does the shape of the actor's face – perhaps the visual equivalent of British humor.



I Confess [1953] (27:20)

Hitchcock occasionally combines backgrounds and foregrounds to convey information about or reflect the personalities of the characters. A good example is the horizontal and vertical lines behind and in front of Inspector Larrue in *I Confess* [1953] as he demonstrates the logic of his mind by stressing that little details are most important in police work (and in Hitchcock's filmmaking). It forms a grid not unlike the introduction to *North by Northwest*.

99. THORNHILL'S REVENGE

In the cafeteria scenes of *North by Northwest* that follow we have three levels of information: what the men say to each other, what they do physically, and how the various backgrounds comment on these events (see above).

Thornhill bargains with Vandamm for Eve in exchange for letting him escape the country. However, as soon as the price of Roger's silence is proposed – “I want the girl” – the camera instantly moves so that both Roger and Vandamm are in front of windows.



North by Northwest [1959] (1:44:34)

That the single object of the two men's affection should unite them physically makes sense, however there are more meanings here. They are now equal, not only in their affection for Eve, but also in that they are both equally dirty in trading secrets for people's lives. During the rest of the conversation, the background always unites the two men – whether the windows or the bricks – rather than separating them as it did at the beginning of their meeting.

Eve now appears, insists on leaving and heads for the door. Thornhill pursues her. They tussle their way back to the same table and stone pillar before which Thornhill and Vandamm had had their conversation.



North by Northwest [1959] (1:45:51)

It is here Eve shoots Thornhill. It is ironic that, in the very place Thornhill offered to exchange Vandamm's life for revenge on Eve, his own life is apparently taken by the object of his revenge. The kinetics of this episode are amplified considerably by Hitchcock cutting the scene exactly with the gunshots. It is as if we simultaneously see the shooting, hear the gunshots, and feel the scene through the editing.



The Lady from Shanghai [1948] (02:20) – Orson Welles

In many ways Eve taking the gun out of her handbag is the reversal of the final scene of the film, a train entering a tunnel. The final scene indicates the imminent sexual consummation of the affair. Here, withdrawing the phallic gun from the symbolic purse presages the postponement of their intimacy. Compare this phallic/vaginal symbolism to that in *The Lady from Shanghai* [1948] in which Elsa Bannister accepts a phallic cigarette from roguish Michael O'Hara and makes her sexual intentions toward him quite clear by placing it carefully between the folds of her handkerchief which is then snapped shut into her purse.

In this cafeteria scene, Hitchcock reverses his usual *modus operandi*. As we have seen, he will often tell the audience more about what is going on than the characters on screen know. This gives the audience a superior position from which they can enjoy the proceedings and savor the suspense. Now, however, we are not told until much later that Eve's gun is loaded with blanks. It is only after the ambulance stops in the forest that we learn Roger is not dead or seriously wounded.

In the interim, we experience a different kind of suspense, one in which one doubts the outcome of the film, one which entertains the possibility the hero of the film has just been shot to death – killed off in the middle of the film!

For first time viewers, this is especially shocking. The main character, who we have identified with all through the previous hour and three quarters is dead! Not only that, Cary Grant is dead! Of course, we learn a few minutes later we have been watching a “play within a play.” However, we must also note that in Hitchcock’s very next film, *Psycho* [1960], he really *does* kill off his main character halfway through the film . . . and she stays dead.



North by Northwest [1959] (1:45:54)

One of the most famous “blooper” in *North by Northwest* occurs in the cafeteria sequence: a young boy, just behind Eve, apparently after many loud retakes of the shooting scene, uses his hands to cover his ears *before* the gun-shot. For those who still harbor doubts about Hitchcock’s complete control of his film making, this “blooper” proves that everyone in the background of this scene, and every other crowd scene, is an actor.



Battleship Potemkin [1925] (49:44) – Sergei Eisenstein

While this may be a reach, I cannot but wonder if Hitchcock, the consummate student of film, saw the error and intentionally included it as an homage to the landmark Russian director Sergei Eisenstein who had a similar “bloop” in the famous Odessa Steps sequence of his groundbreaking *Battleship Potemkin* [1925]. (In the same sequence, Eisenstein shows a man shot and falling by focusing his camera solely on the man’s shoes – a shot Hitchcock replicates later with the death of Leonard.)

Another insight into Hitchcock’s knowledge of and dedication to film and film history appears in *Torn Curtain* [1966]. In the scene filmed in the studio’s opera house, at Hitchcock’s order the opera house from the 1925 *Phantom of the Opera* with Lon Chaney was restored to its original condition.

Shots are fired. Roger falls to the ground. Eve takes off in the car. Vandamm is stopped by Leonard from getting involved and they leave quietly. The Professor, playing doctor, has the critically wounded Thornhill removed to a green ambulance. Once far away from the cafeteria, the Professor allows a final meeting between Eve and Roger in a remote part of the forest.

100. FOREST MEETING



North by Northwest [1959] (1:47:30)

Roger alights from the Professor's ambulance alive and well. The meeting between Eve and Roger begins with the same on-screen composition Hitchcock used near the opening of the sequence at Prairie Stop – each person is at the extreme edges of the frame. The emotional distance narrows as they slowly get closer and closer. The contrast between Prairie Stop and the forest is also one of dryness versus lushness, of death versus growth. Both the locale and the composition are nice symbols of their relationship.



Torn Curtain [1966] (30:36)

Hitchcock uses this idea many times. For instance, in *Torn Curtain* [1966], Michael and Sarah argue about scientist Michael's apparent defection to East Germany. The distance between them, emotion and political, is symbolized by the physical distance between them on screen (in addition to the lighting: defector = darkness; patriot = light).



The Paradine Case [1947] (1:48:15)

This idea of emotional separation being reflected in physical separation was used in *The Paradine Case* [1947]. The judge's wife is about to comment on their extremely negative emotional state of their marriage. The physical abyss between them symbolic of the emotional distance.



Citizen Kane [1941] (54:22) – Orson Welles

Compare this image to the famous ever-expanding breakfast scene in *Citizen Kane* [1941]. Over the years, as their love slowly turns to antipathy and alienation, the physical distance between them at the breakfast table increases in proportion.



Vertigo [1958] (01:03:53)

Hitchcock repeats this shot almost *verbatim* in *Vertigo* [1958] where the distance between Scottie and Madeline is emphasized by putting each of them at the extreme edges of the screen during their trip to the Redwoods.



Marnie [1964] (17:04)

Again in *Marnie* [1964], Marnie and her mother stand at opposite ends of the screen with lots of very symbolic empty space between them as Marnie accuses her mother of not loving her.

Eve begins their tentative and uncomfortable conversation. They both hesitate to confess that they were wrong about each other and to let their true feelings tumble out. Continuing the stream of theatrical references running through the film, the comments include praise for Roger's performance in hoodwinking Vandamm. Thornhill is now an actor playing a role in a melodrama fabricated by the Professor.

Eve then reveals her sordid history and her relationship with Vandamm. She claims her involvement with Vandamm, and the resulting patriotism was a means to stem her boredom. In parallel, Roger will later confess that his wives divorced him because he led a life that was too dull.

With Eve, however, we suspect it was, even then, more than that, for now she is willing to put her patriotism, or the idealism it represents, even before her love for Roger. Long ago Eve made the decision Roger made only recently: that there are some things in the world more important than one's own small self. And, as fate would have it, by sacrificing the self to a greater good, that greater good always rewards the self with personal growth.

Then Eve reveals, to Roger's shock, that she is leaving with Vandamm that night for parts unknown, probably never to return. Roger learns he has been duped, this time by the very people to whom he gave his trust and are supposed to be protecting him – his own government. No wonder the Professor could not look the Presidents of Mt. Rushmore in the eye. While Thornhill makes a speech about how the government should not exploit people to fight their wars, even cold wars, that very evening he will personally go on to help fight that very war. For his complaints, he gets knocked out by a ham-fisted forest ranger.

For most of his early career, Hitchcock avoided dealing directly with oedipal situations. Typically, the films lacked a father figure: the central couple had to simply survive a series of trials before their bond of love could be cemented. There is Ashenden and Elsa in *Secret Agent* [1936], there is Robert and Erica in *Young and Innocent* [1937], there is Gilbert and Iris in *The Lady Vanishes* [1938], there is Pat and Barry in *Saboteur* [1942]. In these films, anyone who could be seen as a competitive father figure is reduced to a minor character.

With time Hitchcock, seemingly gingerly, approached a more triangular situation where the woman had to choose between the older, clearly evil man, and the younger hero, often a little insipid, but true and honest. Sylvia chooses Ted over Verloc in *Sabotage* [1936], Carol chooses the journalist Johnny Jones over her father in *Foreign Correspondent* [1940], Charlie chooses the wimpy Jack over charming Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt* [1943], Alicia picks Devlin over charming and powerful Sebastian in *Notorious* [1946].

In *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock undertakes his most complex oedipal situation – he combines both types from the past. In the triangle among Eve, Thornhill and Vandamm, Eve chooses Thornhill, the hero over the villain. But we must also recognize that the Professor can also be a figure in a parallel triangle. The Professor, in his control of Eve, sending her to danger or death at will, becomes the evil father who must also be conquered by hero Thornhill. In many ways, the Professor's actions toward Eve recall almost exactly Devlin's power over Alicia in *Notorious* [1946] (except in that film it is the "son" who wields the power, not the "father").

We now recognize Roger's most recent transformation – from a willing but temporary participant in the Professor's ruse to a man making his own decisions and acting on them. As we discussed above, these transformations are symbolized by birth images, typically in womb-like spaces.

Roger's first major transformation occurred while enclosed in Eve's upper berth on the train. His second major transformation to patriot is sealed by the shooting in the cafeteria and symbolized by the gun in the purse. Thornhill's final transformation, a faked near-death and resurrection, takes place in the tight confines of the Professor's ambulance/station wagon. The new Thornhill, as we shall soon see, is now capable of taking on both father figures, Vandamm and the Professor.

101. ROGER'S ABSENT CLOTHES



North by Northwest [1959] (1:52:55)

Roger wakes up locked in a hospital room, *sans* clothes.

Confinement is another theme appearing throughout Hitchcock's work. From the handcuffs in *39 Steps* [1935] to the tiny boat in *Lifeboat* [1944] to the wheelchair into which L. B. Jefferies is confined with a broken leg in *Rear Window* [1954]. The hero's struggle against these various confinements leads to psychological resolution: love and trust in *39 Step*, heroism and honesty in *Lifeboat* and resolution of gender issues in *Rear Window*. Thus, when Roger rattles the door of the hospital room in which the Professor locked him, he is really rattling on the door to his future. Indeed by escaping from the hospital Roger resolves his alcoholism, his inability to commit to love at anything more than the surface level, and he pokes holes in Cold War ideology. Not a bad evening's work.

Here another of Hitchcock's seemingly infinite repertoire of clever little devices should be noted. Thornhill turns off the radio broadcasting the news of his shooting in the cafeteria exactly on the words, "voices raised."

Roger awakens in a hospital wearing only a towel. His clothes have been removed. As mentioned above, clothes often symbolize the Persona – that outermost portion of our personalities that we use to interact with the outside world. Roger’s previous Persona was that of a glib, conforming and rather unthinking Madison Avenue advertising executive. Through his adventures, he discovers other aspects of himself. So it is appropriate that the Professor, in some ways a magical father figure (who is the author of Roger’s “death” and “resurrection”), now takes away his old clothes and brings him new ones. The Professor is nasty, dishonest, callous and, at the same time, sympathetic, kind, and solicitous. One of the things that makes Hitchcock’s films so interesting is that he assiduously avoids having simple-minded, single-function characters.

Roger’s change of clothes – and the implication of a change of personality – is parallel to what Marion does in *Psycho* [1960]. In addition to changing from the symbolic white to equally symbolic black underwear after stealing the money, after having been discovered by the policeman and thinking she would be recognized for the thief she is, she pulls into a car lot and changes cars.

102. ROGER'S RELIGIOUS WOUNDS

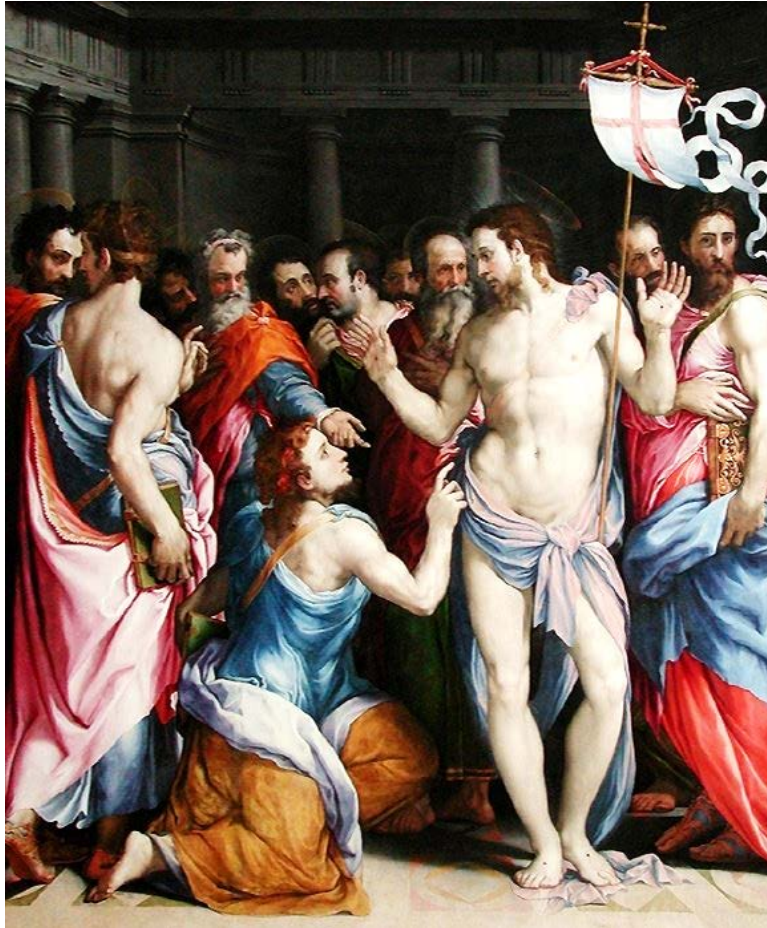


North by Northwest [1959] (1:53:32)

The Professor asks about Roger's wound. He received a blow to his side while falling during the fake shooting at the Mt. Rushmore cafeteria. The correspondence of this wound to that of Jesus is another in the growing panoply of religious symbolism in this film.

When the Professor felt Roger's heart in the cafeteria, he shook his head to the negative implying Roger was dead. And here we see him alive and well. Roger "died" and came to life before our very eyes!

The Professor's pose, pointing at Roger's wound, is strongly reminiscent of the many paintings of St. Thomas. Typical is *The Doubting of St. Thomas* by Francesco di' Rossi in 1543. The resemblance is striking.



Francesco de' Rossi *The Doubting of St. Thomas* (1543)

The Professor also resembles the Old Testament God: he is nameless; he manipulates hordes of people in ways they don't understand; he asks for sacrifice and allegiance with little in return; but ultimately he becomes a benevolent father-figure who seems to know what is best even though his means may be obscure – even offensive – to us mere mortals. And at the end of the film we find him standing atop a high mountain ordering his underlings to shoot bolts down upon the evildoers.

Religion and its symbolic possibilities, which Hitchcock portrays in a both positive and negative light in an apparent love-hate relationship, has always been of great interest to him perhaps because of his Jesuit prep school education at St. Ignatius College, Stamford Hill, beginning at about age eight. His films are rife with both demonstrations and critiques of Christian doctrine. From film to film he seems to randomly alternate between positive and

negative views of religion. (When offered an audience with the Pope, Hitchcock turned it down saying, “What would I do if the Holy Father said that in this world, where there is so much sex and violence, I ought to lay off?”)



The Pleasure Garden [1925] (09:27)

Hitchcock began his career by lampooning religion, but only lightly. In his first film, *The Pleasure Garden* [1925], the country girl, Jill, says her prayers before bed while the city girl, Patsy, looks on in curiosity.



The Lodger [1927] (1:23:19)

In his first suspense/thriller, *The Lodger* [1927], Hitchcock refers to his hero in religious terms. The guiltless hero is falsely accused, then assailed by a mob. Trying to escape, the handcuffed hero hangs by his bound hands, suffering and helpless, from a distinctly cross-shaped fence in clear a reference to the Crucifixion.



The Lodger [1927] (1:07:29)

And a few moments later, we see the hero rescued from the fence and being cared for by the heroine and her friends in a Lamentation pose similar to that painted by John Valentine Haidt in 1753.



John Valentine Haidt *Lamentation Over the Body of Christ* (1758)

“ ad tuam gloriam
utamur, per Jesum Christum,
Dominum nostrum.”

Downhill [1927] (05:46)

In the silent *Downhill* [1927], Hitchcock shows a college dining hall in prayer before a meal with a title card showing the prayer, in Latin no less.



Downhill [1927] (08:00)

And later in the same film, Hitchcock shows the hero Roddy sitting next to a minister. Soon the wealthy Roddy will not only feed a poor child, but sacrifice his own career and life for the benefit of his impoverished friend, Tim.



Rich and Strange [1931] (15:37)

In *Rich and Strange* [1931], Hitchcock is back to comedy. Drunken Fred misses the bed and winds up on his knees. His wife Emily, equally drunk, sees him and thinks he is praying. So, she too, kneels to say her prayers. Fred recovers but then notices his wife, so he joins her in prayer. All this after a night of drunken revelry in the Paris demimonde.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1934] (36:20)

In 1934 version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Hitchcock shows us a church, a den of spies and murderers, called “The Tabernacle of the Sun.” They still sing traditional Christian hymns and quote the Essenes but use hypnotism as part of their indoctrination and collect guns as “offerings.” The graphics of the scene, a dark spiral obscuring the light, and the empty pulpit are highly symbolic. The villain of the piece is named Abbott, i.e., Abbot. In 1934 few ever heard of “The Tabernacle of the Sun” (from Psalm 19:4), so the general audience was probably not too offended.

In fact, this film may be Hitchcock’s most virulent attack on organized religion. When Bob enters the church, there are parishioners at prayer, so we can only assume this is a functioning church. Therefore, we do not have a villain posing as a priest, but an actual priest doing the bidding of a foreign government bent on assassination.



The 39 Steps [1935] (22:25)

In 1935, another poke at the clergy is found in *The 39 Steps* where two women's underwear salesmen display their wares much to the chagrin of a priest sitting opposite. He bolts from the train in utter horror.



Secret Agent [1936] (22:33)

A church organ becomes the place of murder in *Secret Agent* [1936] and the organ's constant drone, caused by the collapsed body sprawled on it, becomes a parody of the hymn tunes one would expect to hear. Here the church and its representatives are seen in a distinctly negative light.



Sabotage [1936] (1:08:34)

In *Sabotage* [1936] Hitchcock demonstrates that his sense of irony extends to matters religious. Mrs. Verloc just killed her husband for murdering her young brother and is on her way to the police station to confess. This takes her past a sign reading, “Repent Ye and Believe.”



The Lady Vanishes [1938] (1:02:59)

In *The Lady Vanishes* [1938], a female criminal disguised as a nun is discovered because she is wearing high heels. However, she later has a change of heart: she helps rescue the British Miss Froy apparently because she is also British. Perhaps the wearing of the habit rubbed off a little.



Foreign Correspondent [1940] (31:10)

In *Foreign Correspondent* [1940], a church tower is a place of an attempted murder and the accidental death of the would-be murderer. Is this an example of divine intervention or just plain luck?



Suspicion [1941] (07:20)

In *Suspicion* [1941], Johnnie uses the excuse of going to church to pick up Lina. Johnnie, in the company of Lina's family, march to the church, full of foreboding and framed by leafless, barren trees. But at the last minute, Johnnie guides Lina away from the church to a lover's tryst.



Shadow of a Doubt [1943] (1:42:24)

In *Shadow of a Doubt* [1943], Hitchcock has serial killer Uncle Charlie quote St. Paul (1 Timothy 5:23). Later, after two unsuccessful attempts to kill his young niece, at his going-away party Hitchcock poses Uncle Charlie next to a priest. At the end of the film, during Charlie's funeral, we hear the unseen minister inside the church saying, "the sweetness of his soul will live on forever." What a horrifying thought.



Lifeboat [1944] (49:32)

In *Lifeboat* [1944], the vain, self-centered, and egotistic Constance, during the course of the adventure, gives up her treasured worldly possessions, gives away her last cigarette, and even kisses a man she despises to comfort him. She is redeemed. Hitchcock photographs her as a saint, halo and all in an arrangement reminiscent of Bernini's *St. Therese of Avila*.



Gian Lorenzo Bernini *St. Theresa of Avila* (1647-52)

The depth of Hitchcock's knowledge of religion is revealed in *Stage Fright*. Eve says she played "the fourth deadly sin." If we look at the modern Catholic definition of the Seven Deadly Sins, this makes no sense at all, for Sloth couldn't be farther from Eve's behavior: active, adventurous, and eager. However, if we go to the Old Testament and the Book of Proverbs 6:16-19, we find the fourth thing King Solomon said God abhors is, "A heart that devises wicked plots." And Eve at the point is in the middle of devising a plot to convince Inspector Smith to reveal the details of the murder.



Strangers on a Train [1951] (1:49:24)

In *Strangers on a Train* [1951], Hitchcock concludes the film with a priest asking the same question of Guy Haines as Bruno did in the beginning. Guy and Ann hurry away leaving the priest rather befuddled. While Hitchcock ends the film with a pleasant, funny stress-relieving scene, he has, at the same time made an equivalence between a priest and the psychopathic murdered, Bruno.



I Confess [1953] (03:28)

With a priest at the center of *I Confess* [1953], it becomes Hitchcock's most overtly religious films. The priest, Father Logan, hears a murderer's confession and because of the sanctity of the confessional, cannot tell anyone, even to clear his own name when accused of the murder. The burden under which the priest suffers is emphasized by Dimitri Tiomkin's brilliant score introducing us to the priest with the deeply brooding strains of the *Dies Irae*, the chant for the dead. On screen is a view of the church as a path into darkness.



I Confess [1953] (03:53)

A moment later, Father Logan, to investigate the darkness, uses a candle from the altar – a far better way to investigate the darkness of the soul rather than the more practical approach of simply turning on the lights.

Later outside the courthouse, when a mob attacks the innocent and wrongly accused Father Logan, one man shouts, “Preach us a sermon, Logan!” This is a reference to the Gospel of Matthew 26:67-68, “Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, . . .” And Otto, the real murderer who just perjured himself falsely accusing Logan of the crime, quickly becomes Judas.



The Trouble with Harry [1955] (01:42)

In *The Trouble with Harry* [1955] Hitchcock uses the image of a church to lull the audience into thinking the beautiful rural Vermont countryside is a place of peace and harmony . . . which he then proceeds to destroy.



The Wrong Man [1956] (1:36:00)

Another film loaded with Catholic symbology is *The Wrong Man* [1956] in which Manuel Christopher Balestrero, a deeply religious man, is seen praying with rosaries to religious icons. One cannot but wonder if the

dark, threaten shadow approaching from the left has any significance. During one of these prayers, Hitchcock dissolves to the appearance of the true criminal arrested as if it were an answer to a prayer. While this film is based on an actual incident, Hitchcock took significant liberties for dramatic – and religious – purposes: the real-life Manny was actually at work when the real criminal was arrested.



The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (1:15:04)

In the 1956 version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* the kidnapper, spy, and assassin is clearly portrayed as a mainstream priest.



Vertigo [1958] (2:08:00)

A nun's entrance in *Vertigo* [1958] seems to cause July/Madeline's death. This may be the ultimate expression of, or even a satire on, the fear of nuns.



Topaz [1969] (1:28:05)



Annabale Carracci *Pieta* (1560-1609)

In 1969, late in his career, in *Topaz* Hitchcock does something quite unexpected. Rather than subtle religious references that are to be discovered by the audience with which he peppered his previous films, he makes a blatant, obvious, and rather heavy-handed reference to Annabale Carracci's *Pieta*.



Family Plot [1976] (03:19)

Hitchcock begins his final film, *Family Plot* [1976], by showing a fake mentalist peeking at her intended victim through hands holding a set of Rosary beads.



Family Plot [1976] (1:19:57)

Later a bishop is kidnapped in his own church in front of dozens of worshipful but helpless parishioners.

Perhaps the most unexpected religious reference in Jesuit-educated Hitchcock's career is the quotation read at the funeral in *Family Plot*: The Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 9:20-27).

104. NEW CLOTHES



North by Northwest [1959] (1:54:26)

As Roger changes clothes – out of his gray flannel suit (and all it symbolizes) for the first time – he also changes the ways he lies. Throughout the film he has been lying, from the taxicab to the meeting with Eve on the train . However, he always lied for his own benefit. Now, when he lies to the Professor about forgetting all about Eve, he is lying for a higher good, for his relationship with Eve. Actually, this behavior is modeled after the Professor's, who supposedly lies for the good of his country.

In fact, Roger also lies about his alcoholism to the Professor, who leaves the room to get a bottle of Bourbon for both of them. Really, at this point in his life, Roger has little interest in alcohol, it is simply a ruse to see if the Professor will leave the door unlocked.

The same liquor that in the beginning of the film threatened Roger's life now becomes a means of his escape. Thornhill is a gin drinker – Martinis and Gibsons. Now he accepts the liquor once forced upon him – Bourbon – in the same way he accepted the role of George Kaplan. His submission to fate rather than believing himself to the over-inflated captain of his own destiny is another signal of his personal growth.

105. ESCAPE & RE-REBIRTH



North by Northwest [1959] (1:55:25)

As soon as the Professor leaves, Roger tries the door. With a look of disgust – the Professor apparently trusts no one, not even a cooperative, submissive, drinking buddy – he finds it locked, and decides to escape through the window.

As Roger edges along the ledge on the outside of the hospital. In a clever piece of photography, Hitchcock allows us to watch Thornhill's escape without ever showing us the height and the danger it represents. We hear the sounds from the street below, but we never see it. It would be customary in this type of dramatic situation to use the “down-shot” to graphically show the vertiginous and dizzying height and thus the danger Thornhill faces in his climb from room to room along the narrow ledge. Hitchcock doesn't do this for a very good reason – he's saving the down shots for when they will have maximum impact . . . on Mt. Rushmore. Again, it is Hitchcock's restraint that brings another touch of brilliance to the film.

Leaving one space through a narrow opening, squeezing out through a window, taking a dangerous journey, and entering another space again

through a narrow opening is a series of moves representing a miniature symbolic birth. Leaving the hospital room is leaving one world, a world of submission and inaction, of submitting to one's fate, to being passive, of letting others take care of you (shades of mother). Entering the other hospital room as a means of escape is to enter a proactive world where Roger makes decisions and takes responsibility for his own life. The changes in his life are clearly symbolized in the little comedy Hitchcock stages for us.



North by Northwest [1959] (1:55:44)

Roger climbs through an open window into the adjacent hospital room. There, a woman dressed in perhaps the sexiest hospital gown in existence awakens and shouts an alarmed, “Stop.” When she puts on her glasses and sees the handsome Cary Grant striding through her room, she repeats the word, but now seductively and longingly, “Stooooop.”

While this always gets a laugh, it also reveals a lot about Roger's progress. He has always been a lady's man, ever vigilant to women's invitations. This was amply demonstrated in the highly charged sexual banter on the train. Since that time, his commitment to Eve, and thereby to a deeper emotional involvement, changed his whole attitude toward women. I suspect were Roger in the same situation a week before, his reactions would have been quite different – he would have taken the woman up on her invitation.

The presence of a woman in a hospital room further supports the idea that this is a symbolic birth sequence.

Hitchcock will occasionally take us out of the film and make references to things outside the film. The most famous of these are his cameos (discussed above). In addition to “being himself” in his films, Hitchcock will also draw attention to the actors themselves. Here the woman in the hospital room does not respond to Roger Thornhill, but to Cary Grant! Cary Grant gets the same response in *The Bachelor and the Bobbysoxer* [1947] where his role as the world’s handsomest man is reiterated. Playing a painter, he is to address an auditorium full of bored teens. However, when they see him, all the girls – and many of the boys – start applauding, whooping, hollering, and whistling.

Earlier when Eve mentions that his face is on every front page in America, we know she is talking about Roger Thornhill *and* Cary Grant. But we do see his face in a newspaper during the opening of *Suspicion* [1941] where Lina indeed sees his picture on the front page of the newspaper she’s reading. In the same film Hitchcock plays against Grant’s public image as a romantic lead by having his wife Lina, quite reasonably, suspect that he is about to kill her.

A few years later, Hitchcock extends this device of playing against type. Sean Connery, at the height of his fame, is cast as Mark, the central male figure in *Marnie* [1964]. Marne is so mentally unbalance that she shows sexual disinterest in Mark. In 1964, what healthy, heterosexual woman could resist the charismatic attraction of the combination of the two sexiest male fantasies of the day: Sean Connery and James Bond? Thus, Hitchcock again propels us out of the film to make references to the actor’s off-screen persona.



The Outlaw [1947] (45:48) – Howard Hughes

Another extra-filmic reference appears in *Vertigo* [1958]. When Midge describes the bra she is drawing as “designed by an engineer” and “based on the principles of a cantilever bridge,” everyone knows that that “engineer” is Howard Hughes and the bra he designed is for his new innamorata and star, Jane Russell whose ample assets were then appearing in *The Outlaw* [1947]. Obviously, Hitchcock had a chuckle or two making references to people outside his films in more than one way.



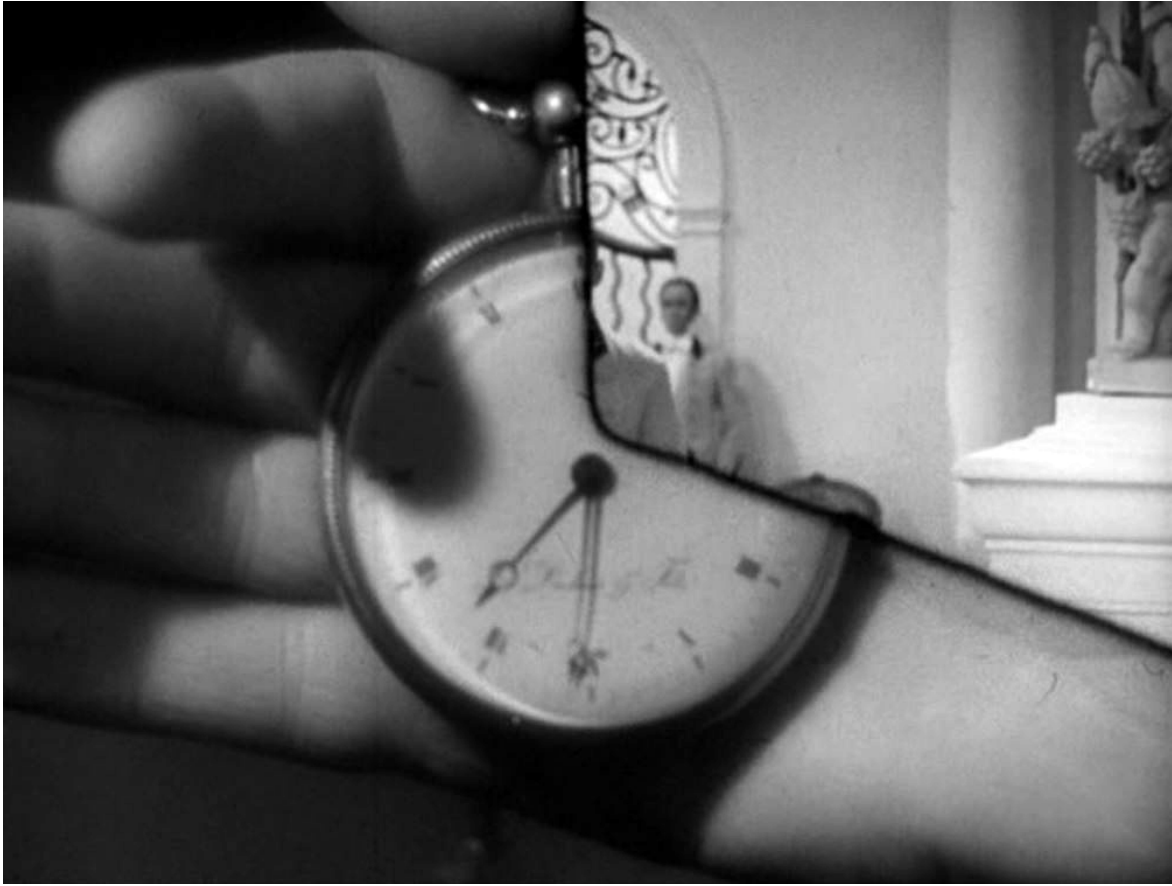
The Man Who Knew Too Much [1956] (1:28:32)

Toward the end of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956], a large poster in front of the Royal Albert Hall announces boldly that the Storm Cloud Cantata will be conducted by none other than Bernard Herrmann, the composer of many of Hitchcock's best film scores including *Psycho* [1960].



Murder! [1930] (1:00:25)

A very early version of this idea of a poster giving information about the film appears in *Murder!* [1930] where a placard advertising a play, “Nothing but the Truth,” is not only a comment on Sir John’s investigation of the falsely convicted Diana Baring, but also a play he produced (a play within a play?). Another type of extra-filmic reference appears in the same film: Hitchcock gave the actress’ name to the character she plays – Nora Baring plays Diana Baring.



Waltzes from Vienna [1934] (49:27)

An extra-filmic reference that reveals both Hitchcock's sense of humor and his interest in film technology appears in *Waltzes from Vienna* [1934]. He shows us a close-up of a pocket watch reset to perpetrate a joke. Then he cuts to the next scene showing the consequences of that joke. The transition between the two scenes uses a technique called a "clock wipe" where the transition frame rotates like the hands of a clock – in this case superimposed over the face of the watch.

106. VANDAMM'S HOUSE



North by Northwest [1959] (1:58:43)

After escaping from the Professor's imprisonment, Roger takes a taxi to Vandamm's mountain retreat. This parallels the taxi ride at the beginning of the film. In both cases, he lies to get to where he wants to go: in New York he lied about the health of his secretary, now he lies to the Professor about his desire for liquor. In both cases, he is escaping from non-existent diseases – his “sick” secretary in New York and his hospitalization from being “shot” in Rapid City. In each case, a taxi is taken to work: in New York it was advertising work, here it is the work of rescuing one's love and completing the psychic maturation of his own soul.

Roger arrives at Vandamm's house. A strange beast: a combination of a mountain cabin and an all-glass international-style architectural monument (invented by the designers at MGM). He spies Eve in her room and begins to climb some steel girders to get up to her.

Vandamm's house now takes on a different feeling as we figure out that it sits atop the Presidential portraits in stone. It is like an alien intelligence sitting malignantly atop the representation of what America believes is best about itself. The European modernist architecture of that house takes on the

flavor of threat, the locus of the source of malevolence. Perhaps Vandamm brought the architecture with him from wherever he came.

Again, Hitchcock restrains himself from using the “down-shot” to show the danger as Thornhill climbs out on the beam. The blank blue “sky” is enough to imply height. Thornhill is literally going out on a limb – to climb toward Eve’s room and to dissuade her from her task.



North by Northwest [1959] (1:59:57)

Fortuitously, Roger eavesdrops on the conversation between Vandamm, Eve, and Leonard. Once Eve leaves, Vandamm says that Leonard is like his own right arm, and Leonard replies that it should have been cut off sooner. This is very odd. Is he referring to himself or "cutting off" the relation with Eve? In either case, the cutting metaphor becomes a castration image when we realize Vandamm has invested his masculinity in his relationship with Eve. His vanity overloads his sanity as he now believes he is more attractive to her than was the recently-debilitated Thornhill.

When Eve goes to her room to pack her bags for the trip, she turns on the light. Roger, hiding outside her room notices. The light from her room illuminates his face in an echo of the light illuminating his face at the Chicago airport. The first illumination occurred at the mention of her name; now she illuminates him directly.

107. THROWING MONEY



North by Northwest [1959] (2:00:16)

Ever returns to her room. To attract her attention, Roger throws some coins up to her balcony. This does not work; in fact, it almost gives him away when Leonard, curious about the noise, nearly discovers Roger's hiding place.

This is the last of the old Thornhill, one who would solve problems by “throwing” money at them – worrying about wasting his expensive theater tickets, worrying about his business companions, paying drunk driving fines, bribing his mother, bribing train porters, and so on. The new Thornhill is emerging, driven by creativity, feeling, and emotion, not greed and rote living.

Hitchcock seems to have had an anti-materialist streak for quite some time. Consider the title of his 1931 film *Rich and Strange* [1931]. And in the film following *North by Northwest*, *Psycho* [1960], Hitchcock literally throws \$40,000 into a swamp. How different the meaning of money here than in, say, *The Lodger* [1927] or *Shadow of a Doubt* [1943]. There carelessly leaving a pile of bills on a mantle or a bedside table is a sign of derangement, a sign we should immediately be suspicious.

Leonard reveals Eve's duplicity to Vandamm (and to the eavesdropping Roger). Leonard alone, perhaps because of his homosexuality – he calls it, “My woman's intuition” – sees through Eve's plan.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:01:45)

What was Leonard doing going through Eve's purse when he discovered the gun? And once he found the gun, what made him suspicious enough to open the gun and check the bullets? Is it the jealousy Vandamm accuses him of, or some deeper overall mistrust of women? Or is it, perhaps, Leonard's own personal anger identifying with the victimization of women? In any case, Leonard cruelly and sadistically demonstrates that there are blanks in Eve's gun by shooting it, point-blank, at Vandamm. In response, Vandamm hits Leonard square in the face. And is Leonard's shooting of Vandamm an act of sadistic jealousy?



Foreign Correspondent [1940] (26:50)

Leonard mentions the old Nazi technique of shooting one of your own agents to convince the enemy. Perhaps he is referring to *Foreign Correspondent* [1940] where the Nazis dress up a man to look like the international diplomat Van Meer and then shoot him so they can safely extract secret information from the real Van Meer who they kidnapped.

When Vandamm bashes Leonard, we see a series of facial expressions pass across Vandamm's face that reveal much about his emotional life – perhaps for the first and only time in the film. After slugging Leonard out of anger and surprise, he draws his hand back in pain. At first this is the pain of bruised knuckles, but it quickly transforms into the pain of betrayal, both by Eve and by Leonard – both of whom he assumed loved him.

In the case of Eve, he realizes he has actually loved her far more than he has admitted to himself. This parallels Thornhill's pain of discovery about his own feelings toward Eve. In the case of Leonard, Vandamm realizes his accusation of Leonard's jealousy regarding his relation to Eve is correct,

Leonard *is* in love with him and has just acted out, in an ultimately impotent way, the murderous impulses resulting from “if I can’t have you, no one can.”

Also, in this scene there is an interesting parallel to the other knockout punch in the film – that is, when the forest ranger punches Thornhill. Both incidents involve finding out a truth that is at once unpleasant and revealing but will force a change in a character’s actions.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:02:49)

Hitchcock once again uses the “fly on the ceiling” high camera-angle that he previously associated with death. But now he takes it a step further by actually moving the camera still further upward. We are looking down on Leonard and Vandamm as they discuss throwing Eve to her death from an airplane. Cleverly, the camera moves pointedly upward to give us a physical feeling of the height from which she will fall. It also predicts the heights from which we will soon see her dangling on Mt. Rushmore.

108. STIGMATA & MATCHBOOKS



North by Northwest [1959] (2:03:42)

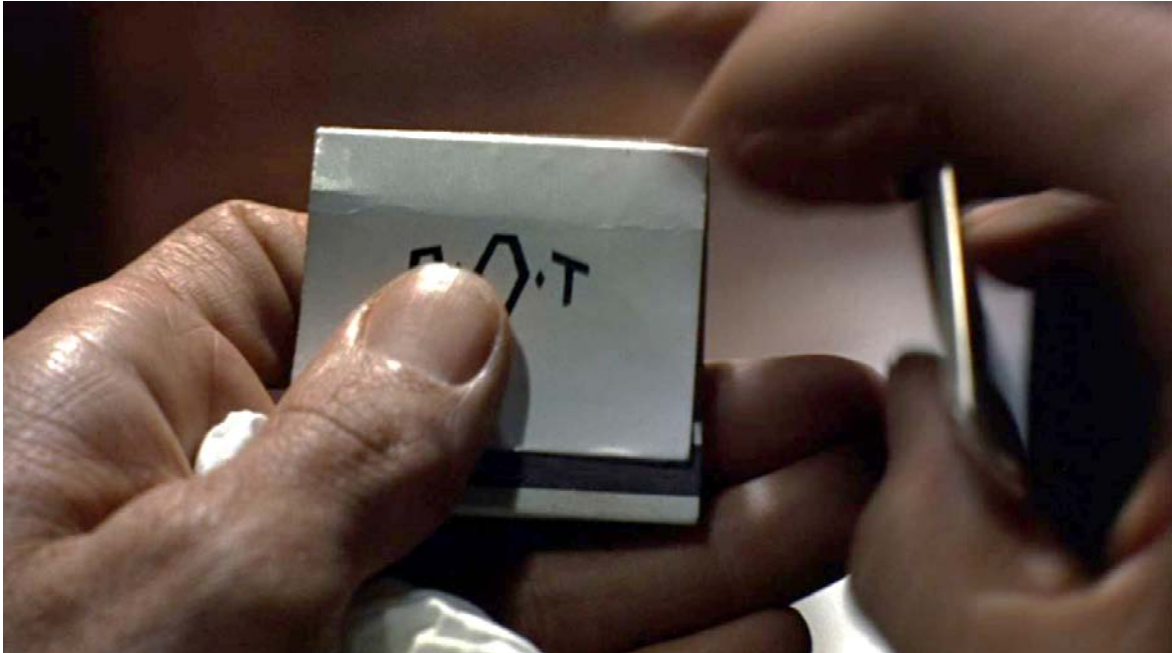
Alarmed, Roger now realizes he must warn Eve that her cover has been blown. To get to her room, he climbs up a sheer rock wall on the outside of the house (clinging to them in a way that predicts the rock walls of Mt. Rushmore).

The roughness of the end-cut flag stones tears the palms of his hands. Thornhill's Christ-like stigmata are now complete: both palms bloody and the side wound received during the fake shooting. If this seems farfetched, one must ask why Hitchcock shows us a close-up of Roger's bloody palm when it is totally unnecessary for the plot, especially at this point of high suspense. At the symbolic level, however, it makes perfect sense: The old Roger Thornhill is dead and a new one is being born.



Federico Barocci *St. Francis* (ca 1600)

Wiping the blood from his hand with his monogrammed handkerchief, Thornhill sees the monogram and gets the idea to use his monogrammed matchbook, which Eve will recognize, as a warning device. What was once a symbol of Thornhill's emptiness, the matchbook initialed "R.O.T.," now becomes a device of warning and rescue. Having imitated Christ in his sacrifice and crucifixion, Thornhill now finds the emptiness inside him filled and he can use what was once his flaw, like his drinking, as a tool for fulfillment.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:04:16)

But as bad timing would have it, Eve leaves the room and goes downstairs before he can warn her. He writes a message on the matchbook and plans to toss it so it will land in front of her. As Leonard and Vandamm look to the airplane, their means of escape, Roger throws his matchbook from the balcony, his means of helping Eve escape. But he misses and the matchbook winds up, unnoticed, on the floor. Bad timing again.

Tension builds as Leonard discovers the matchbook, picks it up, but simply tosses it on the table. Leonard's previously stated suspicion of neatness – by which he earlier discovered Eve's duplicity – now comes back as his own desires for neatness blinds him to the clue that could doom Eve and Roger. With psychological growth, Roger's bad habits have turned into positive tools; Leonard's have not because he is psychologically stuck.

Again, we must admire Hitchcock's restraint. He avoids showing us a close-up of the matchbook and Leonard's nearby foot as he picks it up. Like the deferred down-shots, Hitchcock reserves this close-up of Leonard's shoe for a crucial shot at the end of the film.



Spellbound [1945] (46:58)

Hitchcock uses a similar device in the earlier *Spellbound* [1945] but in a more primitive form. John Brown slips a note under Dr. Petersen's door. Just as she is about to pick it up, the police burst into her room looking for Brown. She tries desperately not to alert them to the note's presence. All seems well, but on the way out, Dr. Murchison picks it up – ignorant of its importance – and hands it to her. In this case Hitchcock included several close-ups. In *North by Northwest*, the lack of close-ups increases the tension of the scene considerably since we are not distracted from the participants.



Torn Curtain [1966] (33:01)

In the rather late *Torn Curtain* [1966], the same device become perfunctory. Dr. Armstrong's East German minder simply picks up the note with little tension or consequences.

Looking out of the window, Vandamm and Leonard talk about the weather, the plane and its path, "he's going to take a long slow descent," and so on. But there is a second level of meaning to almost every word they say – it's about Thornhill, his actions and his relations to Eve: "you couldn't ask for a better night than this," as Eve picks up the matchbook; "ceiling and possibilities unlimited," as she realizes what it signifies; "ah, there he goes starting his turn," as she opens the matchbook; "we better get moving;" as she reads the message; "he should have his wheels on the ground inside three minutes," as Roger runs to Eve's room; and so on. This may be one of the most subtly choreographed dances between plot, visuals and several levels of text ever put on film.

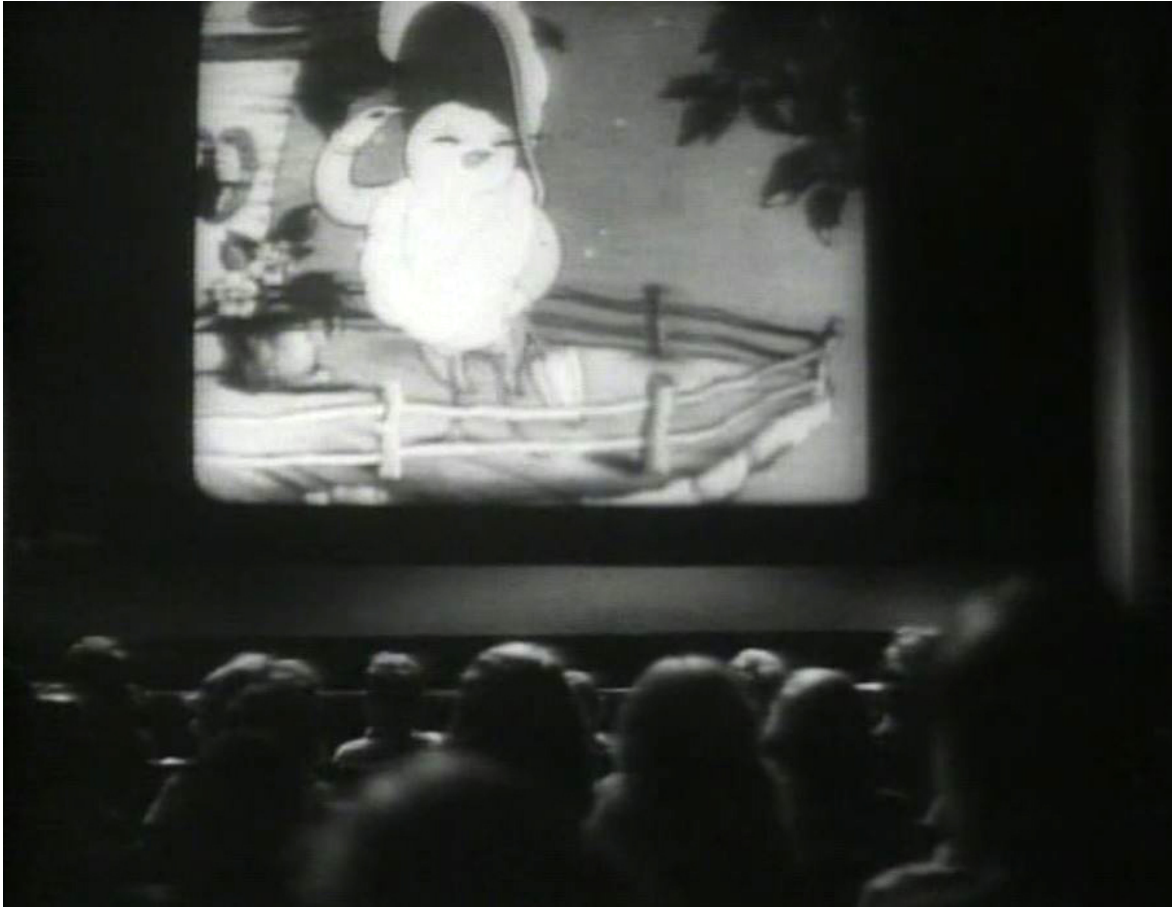
Realizing Roger is nearby, Eve makes an excuse to go upstairs to meet him. Roger reveals Leonard has blown her cover. She returns downstairs and joins the party heading for the airplane. Roger listens to them leaving while leaning against the edge of a wall, jagged with end-cut flagstones, reflecting the jaggedness of his thoughts.

109. TELEVISION & POSING



North by Northwest [1959] (2:07:57)

The maid notices Roger hiding on the balcony, his image reflected in a television, and holds him at gunpoint. This contrasts nicely with the beginning of the film, with all the anonymous cars and people reflected in Thornhill's office building. This also recalls the reflection in the nameplate on the Professor's office building. Now, in the film's third reflection, as Thornhill gains individuality, the reflections become very specific, very personalized; rather than the previously generic view of the anonymous masses, a single man now appears. The irony is that the singular man is reflected in the most anonymous and egalitarian of all media – television.



Sabotage [1936] (1:02:14)

Hitchcock here plays with the idea of a film within a film expanding on the idea of Hamlet's play-within-a-play in the fake assassination at the Mt. Rushmore cafeteria. Previously, in *Sabotage* [1936], Hitchcock used a similar idea: just after a young boy is killed by a bomb, we see his sister in a theater watching a Walt Disney's 1935 Academy Award nominated Silly Symphonies cartoon of *Who Killed Cock Robin?* (a murder mystery featuring caricatures of Mae West (above), Bing Crosby, Harpo Marx, and a satire on a sound transition straight out of *The 39 Steps* [1935]).

But here in *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock goes further than simple ironic commentary. It is an irony of new depth: it is as if advertising man Roger Thornhill designed a television ad full of "expedient exaggerations," that is, lies and now finds himself is caught in his own web.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:08:21)

As the maid holds Roger at bay, we have an extreme example of Hitchcock's attention to symbolic detail. The maid stands with the gun in her right hand pointing at Roger and her slightly bent left arm by her side.

Immediately behind her is a lamp with an oriental figure forming its base. This is a commercialized version of the famous Standing Buddha in Thailand, who helps all attain the enlightenment and deliverance. Roger's enlightenment about the blanks in the gun the maid holds leads to his deliverance.



Standing Buddha – Wat Pikulthong, Thailand

Notice Hitchcock poses the maid to be the exact mirror image of the Buddha. Thus, the maid is the evil, unenlightened mirror image of the Buddha. Before Roger are now the positive and negative feminine, side by side. Since the maid strongly resembles Roger's mother, we can only assume Eve is personified by the goddess. And, just as Roger rejected his mother and all she stands for, he now rejects the maid.

After a few minutes Roger comprehends, as he says moments later, "It took me a while to realize she was holding me with your damn gun, the one with the blanks." How the maid got Eve's gun is never explained. But by realizing the falseness of the gun, and the associated mother image, he experiences one final epiphany. And now, finally, able to tell the false from the real, both external and internal, he springs into action.



Shadow of a Doubt [1943] (02:20)



Shadow of a Doubt [1943] (08:23)

Hitchcock uses the similarity of two people (or figures), one good and one evil, striking the same pose in *Shadow of a Doubt* [1943]. We see evil Uncle Charlie reclining on his bed and a few moments later we see the presumably innocent young Charlie in the same pose. Note that beneath one is a coverlet of small hard squares, unchanging in their repetition, while under the other are soft undulating waves. Behind one is a headboard of hard iron curls with holes in the filigree while behind the other is solid wood.



Vertigo [1958] (1:10:57)

In *Vertigo* [1958], Hitchcock cleverly combines the portrait and the person in one image with the same idea: identical postures.

Eve, frightened, is led to the airplane and to her impending doom by Vandamm and Leonard. Vandamm asks Eve what is bothering her. She replies that she left her earrings behind. Vandamm comments, “They’ll turn up.” Ironically, what she left behind is Roger, and, in a few moments, he will indeed turn up.

It is interesting to see what Vandamm is taking with him “to the other side.” Aside from the microfilm-containing sculpture, Leonard carries an armload of books. Here again we see the suave European intellectual. Were it not for his politics and his murderous history, he would be a far more admirable and desirable lover for Eve than Roger Thornhill of Madison Avenue. Yet his self-confidence and smugness reveal he cannot change, cannot grow, while Thornhill, in all his insecurity and conflicts, has always contained the seeds of growth.

We get still another theatrical reference here: Vandamm wants to thank one of henchmen’s wives for a “superb performance” as Mrs. Townsend, about which, Roger ironically said, “What a performance!”

As Eve is about to get on the airplane, her doom apparently sealed, we hear shots and suddenly see Roger running from the house. Roger realized the gun held on him was Eve's, loaded with blanks (this piece of theater even fooled him for a while). Unseen by us, what happened in the house was a variation on what took place at the Mt. Rushmore cafeteria, except the realization that all was theater probably came much faster. Roger jumps into Vandamm's car, Eve grabs the sculpture containing the microfilms, gets in the car, and they make a run for it.

110. THE PUMPKIN



North by Northwest [1959] (2:09:35)

Roger refers to the microfilm-containing figurine as, “the pumpkin,” though now in its first close-up it resembles more of a caricature of the Wicked Witch of the West. “Pumpkin” is more than a light-hearted comment on the shape of the object. This reference may be obscure today, but in 1959, when *North by Northwest* was made, was an image still fresh in people’s minds.



Richard Nixon – ca. 1948

On August 3, 1948, the House Un-American Activities Committee (with whom Richard Nixon was involved) heard an accusation by Whittaker Chambers that Alger Hiss had provided secrets to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The statute of limitations having expired, Hiss was tried for perjury, not treason. The first trial, in which two Supreme Court justices appeared as witnesses friendly to Hiss, ended in a hung jury. A second trial found him guilty and sentenced him to five years in prison. At both trials, the veracity and sanity of Hiss' accuser, Whittaker Chambers, were vital issues as were the filmstrips of official documents allegedly hidden by Chambers on his farm inside a pumpkin. These became known as the "The Pumpkin Papers."

111. THE MEANINGS OF NAMES



North by Northwest [1959] (2:10:45)

Roger and Eve find the road blocked (this was in the days before cars were used to crash through gates). The couple then runs through the forest to escape but finds themselves trapped atop Mt. Rushmore.

The appearance of Mt. Rushmore completes the complex religious subtext of the film. Thornhill's name and several other indicators warned us to note the religious implications all along, but now everything is fully revealed. With the name "Thornhill" we have associations with the crown of *thorns* worn by Jesus and the *hill* upon which the crucifixion took place. And the name of that hill is Golgotha (the Greek transcription of an Aramaic term) which means "The Mountain of Skulls." The identity with the physical look of Mt. Rushmore is obvious.

Eve's name, too, has religious implications (but nothing like the actress herself: Eva Marie Saint!).

Hitchcock repeatedly played with his characters' names. His films are dotted with significant names:

- In *The Lodger* [1927], the policeman courting Daisy is an “average Joe” aptly named Joe.
- In *The Farmer’s Wife* [1928], the eponymous farmer is named Sweetland.
- Alice, in the 1929 *Blackmail*, is lost in a maze of her own guilt.
- In *Sabotage* [1936], Hitchcock reverses the meaning of the name: Freeman is the name of the spymaster.
- Iris, in *The Lady Vanishes* [1938], blooms from a self-possessed snob into a caring woman. In the same film, the coward is named Todhunter; given that “*tod*” means “death” in German, it is no surprise that he dies.
- The long-suffering aunt in *Jamaica Inn* [1939] is named Patience.
- The villain Fischer in *Foreign Correspondent* [1940] is alluded to when Huntley Haverstock says, “There’s something fishy going on around here.”
- Gen. McLaidlaw, Johnnie’s father-in-law in *Suspicion* [1941] tries to lay down the law of how his daughter should live.
- In *Shadow of a Doubt* [1943], the banker is named Mr. Green.
- Constance, in *Spellbound* [1945] is constant in her affection for John.
- In *Notorious* [1946], the confused and lost heroine is named Alicia after Alice in Wonderland and the scheming spy who puts her in danger is named Devlin, that is, “devil in.” (Stanley Kubrick uses the name Alice in almost the same context in *Eyes Wide Shut* [1999].) The villain of the film is named Sabastian and we can assume at the end of the film, abandoned as a traitor to his Nazi cohorts, we will, like St. Sabastian, be used for target practice but unlike his namesake, probably won’t survive.
- In *The Paradine Case* [1947], Judge Lord Thomas Horfield is a lecher. However, Keane is not very keen being taken in by a murderess.

- In *Stage Fright* [1950], young actress Nellie Goode is “always on the make.”
- Guy, in *Strangers on a Train* [1951], is just an ordinary guy while Bruno is a brute, apparently named after Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the kidnapper/murder of Charles Lindbergh’s baby son.
- In *I Confess* [1953], the killer is named Keller.
- Captain Wiles of *The Trouble with Harry* [1955] is nothing if not wily.
- In *To Catch a Thief* [1955], John Robie is a robber.
- Sheriff Calvin Wiggs, in *The Trouble with Harry* [1955], the film’s voice of puritanism, has a name that refers both to Protestant reformer John Calvin and dour President Calvin Coolidge.
- One of Hitchcock’s most remarkably religious films, the film in which he combines the characteristics of Job and Jesus into a single figure, *The Wrong Man* [1956], the main character’s name is Christopher Emanuel Balestrero (Christopher means “Christ bearer” and Emanuel is Hebrew for “God is with us”), and just in case we don’t get the message, his nickname is “Manny.”
- In *Marnie* [1964], Mark’s last name is Rutland and his sexual drive toward Marnie is central to the film.
- In *Frenzy* [1972], Blaney was originally named “Blamey” (i.e., “Blame me”).



Rope [1948] (1:12:09)

In addition to the characters' names, occasionally his titles are sometimes descriptive. For instance, *Rope* [1948] is a long, linear film without any obvious edits.

Hitchcock sometimes combines his interest in numerology with the names he uses: In *Vertigo* [1958], Madeline Elster and Judy Barton are both played by Kim Novak. If we look carefully at the two names and their placement on the alphabet, J.B. and M.E. are both exactly four letters apart in first and last names. The chances of this being coincidence are greatly reduced by observing that in *Psycho* [1960]. Hitchcock plays the same alphabet game. Norman Bates and Marion Carne both occupy the identical spread of eleven letters – and that the two names themselves are separated by only one letter is symbolic of the relation between the two characters. In *Foreign Correspondent* [1940], Johnny Jones becomes Huntley Haverstock. In *Frenzy* [1972], Hitchcock plays with names in a slightly different way. We suspect Dick Blaney of being the murderer. He is also called Richard. Thus, his initials are R. B. The real murderer is Bob Rusk; his initials are the exact reverse, B. R.

112. FEAR OF FALLING



North by Northwest [1959] (2:11:26)

By attempting to climb down the face of the Mt. Rushmore monument, Roger and Eve precariously cling to the rock face.



Rebecca [1940] (1:23:42)

The threat of falling from high places is a repeating theme in many of Hitchcock's films. This fear becomes central in *Vertigo* [1958]. At the end of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1934] Jill's daughter is precariously perched on a high ledge. There is also a lot of action on various rooftops in *To Catch a Thief* [1955]. There is a threat of death by falling from a cliff into the sea in *Suspicion* [1941]. *Rebecca* [1940] is threatened with a fall from a high window at Mrs. Danvers' urging in *Rebecca* [1940].



Rear Window [1954] (1:49:42)

Sometimes the threatened fall actually takes place. A good example is *Rear Window* [1954] where Jefferies actually does fall from his window.



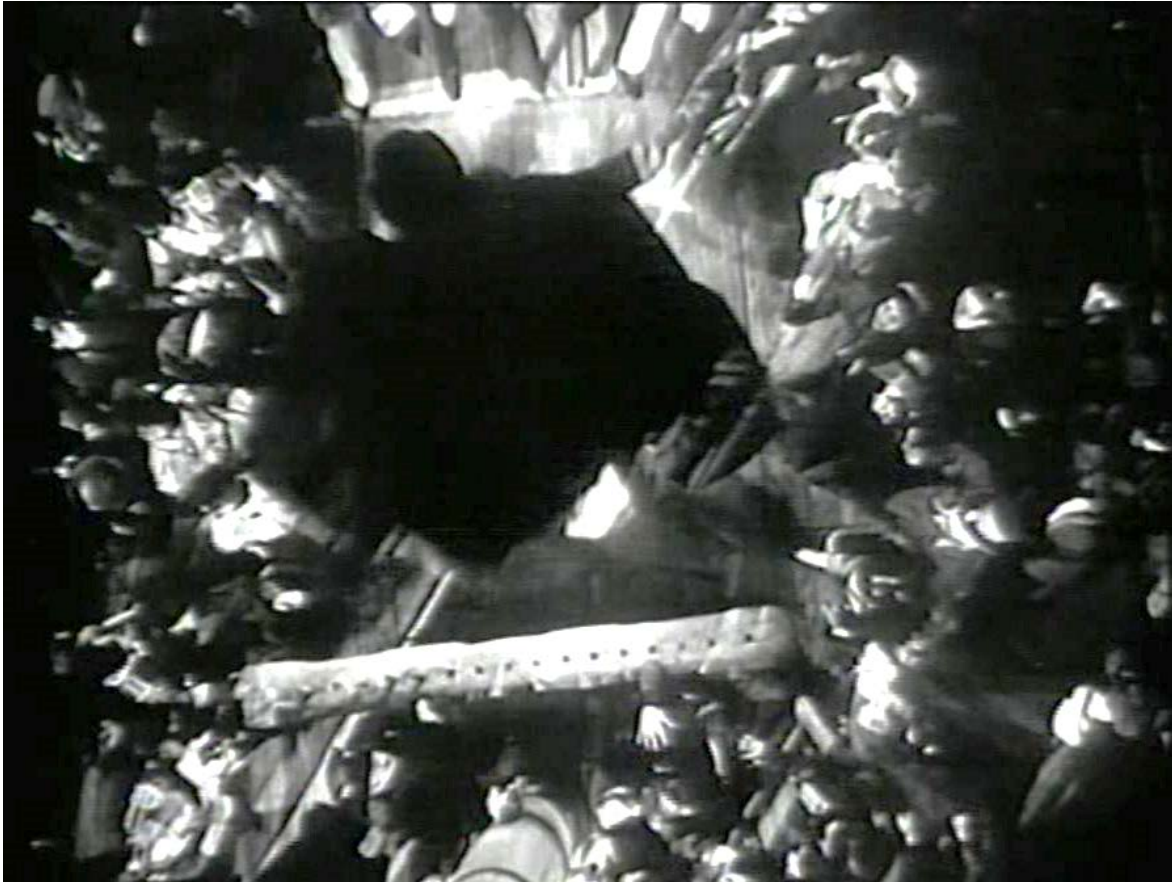
Foreign Correspondent [1940] (1:36:54)

In *Foreign Correspondent* [1940], escaping from the spies, Mr. Folliott intentionally jumps from a window to land unhurt in an awning. This is the only fall Hitchcock photographs from beneath, as if the camera were welcoming the faller. Earlier the assassin Rollie falls from a high church tower to his death.



Saboteur [1942] (1:47:51)

The sleeveless villain of *Saboteur* [1942] falls from the Statue of Liberty.



Jamaica Inn [1939] (1:28:57)

Jamaica Inn [1939] ends with a comparatively modest fall from a sailing ship's mast onto its deck. Given the rotundness of actor Charles Laughton (or a double), perhaps the fall is not so modest.



Vertigo [1958] (05:05)



Vertigo [1958] (1:19:30)

Vertigo [1958] begins with a policeman falling to his death in an alley. Many falls follow. In the middle of the film, we get the false Madeleine's head-first plunge against an idyllic, cloud-filled (and badly painted) landscape.

113. DANGLING



North by Northwest [1959] (2:14:57)

The suspense now kicks into high gear with Eve dangling shoeless over a seemingly infinitely deep abyss.



Number Seventeen [1932] (42:17)

The motif of suspension in mid-air is a constant in Hitchcock's oeuvre. It can be traced back to his thriller-satire, *Number Seventeen* in 1932.



Young and Innocent [1937] (1:02:40)

Eve dangling in space held up only by Roger's hand is an almost exact replay of a scene in *Young and Innocent* [1937] where Erica is saved by Robert (notice that even the initials are the same) from a fall into a deep pit after her car sinks into an open mineshaft.



To Catch a Thief [1955] (1:43:24)

The scene is repeated in *To Catch a Thief* in 1955.



Saboteur [1942] (1:46:44)

A similar scene is used in *Saboteur* [1942], with only the substitution of a sleeve for one of the hands.

114. BIG FACES & SHOES



North by Northwest [1959] (2:11:01)

With two of Vandamm's hoods in pursuit, the couple's only choice is to attempt an impossible descent. Visually, Roger is both puny and unstoppable. Psychologically, Roger Thornhill's descent from a Madison Avenue executive to someone caring about individual people – and himself – seemed equally impossible at the beginning of the film.

The Mt. Rushmore sequence is not the first time Hitchcock graphically contrasts mere human size with the gigantic constructions of civilization's aspirations. Perhaps Hitchcock is saying that even though we humans are small, both in good and in villainy, justice – which is much larger – will be served in these places of human culture and accomplishment.



Blackmail [1929] (1:16:20)

In 1929, in anticipation of the gigantic faces *North by Northwest*, a man is contrasted to a behemoth face in the British Museum before which the villain falls to his death in *Blackmail* [1929].



Saboteur [1942] (1:47:23)

And in *Saboteur* [1942], there is a struggle atop the Statue of Liberty that ends in the villain falling to his death before another gigantic face.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:10:44)

Finally, Hitchcock throws in all the down-shots he has been holding in reserve – we get the full impact of these dangerous, vertiginous heights.

Thornhill's marriage proposal while hanging from George Washington's ear reminds us what a delightful comedy this film has been all along, both visually, and the in the superb writing – "My wives divorced me." "Why?" "I think they said I lived too dull a life." The declaration of love in the face of death appeared previously in 1931 in *Rich and Strange* [1931].

Now one of the hoods, hanging precariously from an impossible rock wall, drops seemingly into infinity. We are horrified . . . until, in the next scene, we see that he lands on a rock platform just a few feet below. Here Hitchcock uses a variation of one of his favorite devices: making the audience root for the villain.

Next Eve loses her shoe and slips a way down the mountainside. This becomes a prediction of Leonard's shoe that will soon threaten an even greater fall. At a psychological level, loss of shoes often symbolizes a change in point of view or orientation. Eve's loss of her shoe symbolizes her adding to her patriotic commitment to her country an equally deeply felt emotional commitment to Roger. In Leonard's shoe, we get the opposite; his point of

view cannot change, his shoe cannot come off or be exchanged, and thus he must die.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:12:02)

Roger throws one henchman down the cliff while Leonard struggles with Eve. Roger winds up with one hand holding Eve and the other desperately grasping a small rock outcrop. He looks up at Leonard and says, “Help! Help me!” These penultimate words, “Help me,” are the celebration of the completion of his psychic journey.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:15:18)

Roger can finally reach out beyond his isolated self and declare to all the world that he is incomplete – that is, human – and needs to interact with others. All we have to do to fully appreciate the changes that have taken place is to remember the supposedly self-contained and self-sufficient Roger Thornhill who stole taxis on the streets of New York and justified it with verbal and moral pyrotechnics to hide his own corruption.

This is the moment in which he fulfills his own name, “Thorn Hill.” Just as Golgotha was the true test of Jesus’ commitment, so now is this parallel place, on his own “Hill of Thorns,” Roger now makes a sacrifice, putting the welfare of others – the one he loves and his country – above his own.



North by Northwest [1959] (2:15:29)

Suddenly Leonard's crushing shoe releases Thornhill's fingers and Leonard slowly topples over, shot from afar under orders from The Professor. One can only wonder if Hitchcock, the consummate film connoisseur, either borrowed this scene or paid homage with it to Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* [1925] in which a person's death is photographed by concentrating the camera only on his shoes.



Battleship Potemkin [1925] (49-310 – Sergei Eisenstein

115. THE MICROFILM



North by Northwest [1959] (2:15:32)

We are treated to another of Hitchcock's visual puns here. We see a close-up of Leonard's shoes as he crushes Roger's hand. We hear a shot, and we see Leonard fall. He drops the statue and it breaks into pieces, disclosing its illicit contents. All is revealed, or as one would say in the spy business, "the case is broken."

What is in the belly of the statuette is, of course, Hitchcock's famous McGuffin – the something that everyone is so concerned about but has nothing to do with what Hitchcock is really interested in, that is, how people act, react and grow. Examples of classic McGuffins are the top-secret treaty clause in *Foreign Correspondent* [1940], the whistled and memorized tune in *The Lady Vanishes* [1938], and the details of the new aircraft engine memorized by Mr. Memory in *The 39 Steps* [1935].

Actually, the choice of the statuette as the residence for the microfilm is significant. The McGuffin, the microfilm, is contained in a clay figurine that seems to be from an ancient, long-dead Meso-American culture. This represents not only the primitiveness of Vandamm's intentions in stealing and selling secrets, but also telegraphs the message that his way of life – the

Communist spy – is as good as dead. In addition, what is hidden in and later born from the cult figure is not the McGuffin microfilm, but Roger's soul.

Another little piece of fun Hitchcock is having with us is the nature of the film inside the statue. At the end of the unwinding roll of film, we can see two of the frames clearly. This is not "microfilm," but a normal roll of 35-mm film! (Microfilm was usually 16-mm and unperforated.) However, a normal 35-mm camera would place the long side of the picture frame parallel to the length of the film. These frames have their long side aligned *perpendicular* to the length of the film. This piece of film was photographed with a VistaVision camera, the very camera was used to photograph *North by Northwest*. This is another of Hitchcock's extra-filmic references. Is Hitchcock saying that all this spy-business-fuss was about the very film we are now watching?



The 39 Steps [1935] (1:23:44)

That a human figurine is the means of smuggling secrets out of the country is reminiscent of *The 39 Steps* [1935] where a real human, Mr.

Memory, rather than a simulacrum, was how the plans for a new airplane engine were to be secreted to a foreign government.

116. DEUS EX MACHINA



North by Northwest [1949] (2:15:35)

Just as Leonard is about to crush Roger's fingers sending him and Eve falling to their certain deaths, a shot rings out. Leonard topples and the camera shows us the Professor, Vandamm in handcuffs and several policemen on a nearby mountain peak. In an instant, all is resolved.

Hitchcock rarely has his hero physically confront and conquer the villain. While he may not have a very high opinion of them, Hitchcock usually leaves the arrest or killing of the villain to the police. He uses this device many times: *The 39 Steps* [1935], *Murder!* [1930], *Stage Fright* [1950], *I Confess* [1953] all leave the dirty work to the police.

It is remarkable that we have only five dead bodies (the two henchmen, the crop-dusting assassins, and Townsend) in such a complex and exciting film. Hitchcock chooses his corpses carefully; rarely do his films have a high body count. *Jamaica Inn* [1939], his bloodiest film, begins with the bludgeoning and knifing of everyone aboard a foundering vessel. While most of *Jamaica Inn*'s mayhem is off screen, we see knives wiped on pants after an off-screen scream or two. Nothing like this could happen in the sophisticated world of *North by Northwest*.

Vandamm now accuses the Professor of not playing fair, “using real bullets.” While Vandamm here demonstrates the stiff-upper-lip attitude of a sophisticated spy, he is quite right in the fundamentals of his indictment. The Professor indeed does not play fair – he plays fast and loose with Eve’s life and with Roger’s life. He decides to protect Roger rather than abandon him to the wolves only when it serves his purposes and the purposes of his spy agency. Here again we see there are perhaps more similarities between the Professor and Vandamm than there are differences.

While most filmmakers spend about five minutes on the resolution of the conflict and the dénouement that follows, Hitchcock seems to toss it off in a matter of seconds, a seeming afterthought. It feels as if he has said what he has to say and has no patience of the niceties of tying the film up into a neat package. A common audience reaction at this point is, “Huh? That’s it?”

Furthermore, Roger and Eve’s rescue comes, not from any effort of their own, but almost literally out of nowhere. This also violates many of the precepts of film convention: Hollywood tradition states that heroine is saved and the villain brought to justice through the hero’s personal efforts. Hitchcock replaces all that with what is normally frowned upon as a disreputable, cheap trick employed by bad writers who cannot find a decent resolution to their plots – the *deus ex machina*.



Shakespeare in Love [1998] (1:50:31) – John Madden

The term comes from ancient Greek plays where, to resolve the problem, a god, typically Zeus, would descend from the sky in a mechanical device (i.e., *machina*) to set things right – thus the term “the god from the machine.” It is still used by screenwriters who cannot write; though it is occasionally used by the talented in a more self-conscious way, as in the sudden and unexpected appearance of Queen Elizabeth to set things right at the end of *Shakespeare in Love* [1998].

Perhaps in *North by Northwest* we should take the idea of *deus ex machina* literally – at least the *Deus* part. The Professor – who we noted earlier in many ways resembles the Old Testament God – appears on a mountain top, directing his forces, and saving his “son” from a descent that would mean death.

Hitchcock used this device many times, almost always with the idea of bringing the film to a quick conclusion. We have Charlie’s highly improbably fall from the train at the end of *Shadow of a Doubt* [1943]; an equally improbable fall that ends Judy’s life in *Vertigo* [1958]; Manny’s encounter with the right man in *The Wrong Man* [1956]; the drummer’s crazed confession at the end of *Young and Innocent* [1937]; hearing the forgotten melody at the end of *The Lady Vanishes* [1938]; and so on.

How did the Professor and his men get there? My assumption is that the Professor discovered Roger gone from the hospital room when he returned with the quart of liquor. Being an intelligent, if disreputable man, he deduced that first, he’d been had (he had done to him what he’d done to Roger), and second, that Roger had probably taken off to save Eve. The Professor gathered his forces, arrives at Vandamm’s in force and arrests the whole crew.

The other important point is the Professor’s motivations. He makes one of the toughest moral decisions of the film – off-screen. He begins quite willing to sacrifice Eve, morally, ethically, and even physically to gain information about Vandamm’s spy network. Had he simply let things play out – remember he does not know Leonard blew Eve’s cover – there was a good chance his plans would have succeeded despite the amateurish interferences of Roger Thornhill.

But the Professor changes his mind. He moves from a position willing to sacrifice Eve to one in which he is willing to sacrifice gaining knowledge

of the spy ring to save Eve and Roger's life and help fulfill their love. Thus, the real miracle that happens in this scene is not the magnificent pistol shot that downs Leonard from what seems to be a quarter mile away (at night), but the triumph of love.

This is one of the central themes of Hitchcock's oeuvre: the triumph of love, sometimes complete, more often, however, disturbingly equivocal, and occasionally tragic. Among Hitchcock's tragedies, where love fails to triumph are a minority: *Vertigo* [1958], *Psycho* [1960], *The Wrong Man* [1956], *Rope* [1948], and *Topaz* [1969]. Among his equivocal films are: *Blackmail* [1929] where a policeman covers up a killing (if not truly a murder) because he is in love with the murderess; in *The Manxman* [1929] the guilty couple sets off to wander the world looking for forgiveness and redemption like some sort of British Flying Dutchman; in *Marnie* [1964], Mark coerces his victimized wife into his car to drive off to who knows what future; in *Sabotage* [1936] a policeman covers up his lovers knowledge about the death of her husband; a similar fate awaits the couple at the end of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* [1941]; in *Rear Window* [1954] the fashion magazine within the exploration book gives lie to Lisa's conformity to Jeff's ideology; and Lina faces an unknown future with the outrageous Johnnie at the end of *Suspicion* [1941]. Love triumphs in *The 39 Steps* [1935], *Saboteur* [1942], both versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1934, 1956], *Foreign Correspondent* [1940], *Spellbound* [1945], and, of course, *North by Northwest*.



The 39 Steps [1935] (1:26:15)

Hitchcock has long been ambiguous about long-term relationships. One of the more obviously expressed doubts is the ending of *The 39 Steps* [1935] where Hannay is holding hands with Pamela but is still wearing handcuffs.

117. THE END & ONE MORE JOKE



North by Northwest [1959] (2:15:36)



North by Northwest [1959] (2:16:05)

The film ends in a single, and justifiably famous edit, in which Hitchcock compresses time and space, leaving us to interpolate the events that have transpired but would not have added to the flow of the film: Roger and

Eve have gotten married, had a celebration with the Professor present perhaps the best man or giving away the bride, and the happy couple have now embarked on their trip back to New York. All this in a single edit from Thornhill's pulling Eve up the rock face of Mt. Rushmore to pulling her into the upper berth on a train.

We also have, in this single edit, a contrast between the open spaces of Mt. Rushmore with the possibility of falling to one's death, and the closed and comfortable space of the upper berth of the train's sleeping compartment. Thornhill experienced this before, when Eve hid him from the police with no small risk of smothering him in the process. The associations with a womb – her womb – are now unavoidable. But now it is *he* that is drawing her into the womb of comfort and warmth – their newly established relation. He admits that bedding down in the upper berth is silly, but the new Thornhill is now “sentimental.”



North by Northwest [1959] (2:16:07)

Since most people in the audience are laughing at this point, they often miss Hitchcock's last little bit of symbolism. As the train rushes into the tunnel and into the future for Eve and Roger, the back of the engine unit has the biggest red splash of the whole film. If red symbolizes health and healing, they are certainly heading in the right direction.

Audiences inevitably laugh at the obvious sexual implications of the train penetrating the tunnel at the end of *North by Northwest*. It is arguably one of the most famous (school-boyish) dirty jokes put on film.



The Skin Game [1931] (1:18:25)

Hitchcock ends other films with a similar symbolic comment. *The Skin Game* [1931], for instance, ends with a distinctly out of context felling of a tree. However, symbolically it makes perfect sense: both feuding families have been toppled by their evil machinations.



The Trouble with Harry [1955] (20:32)

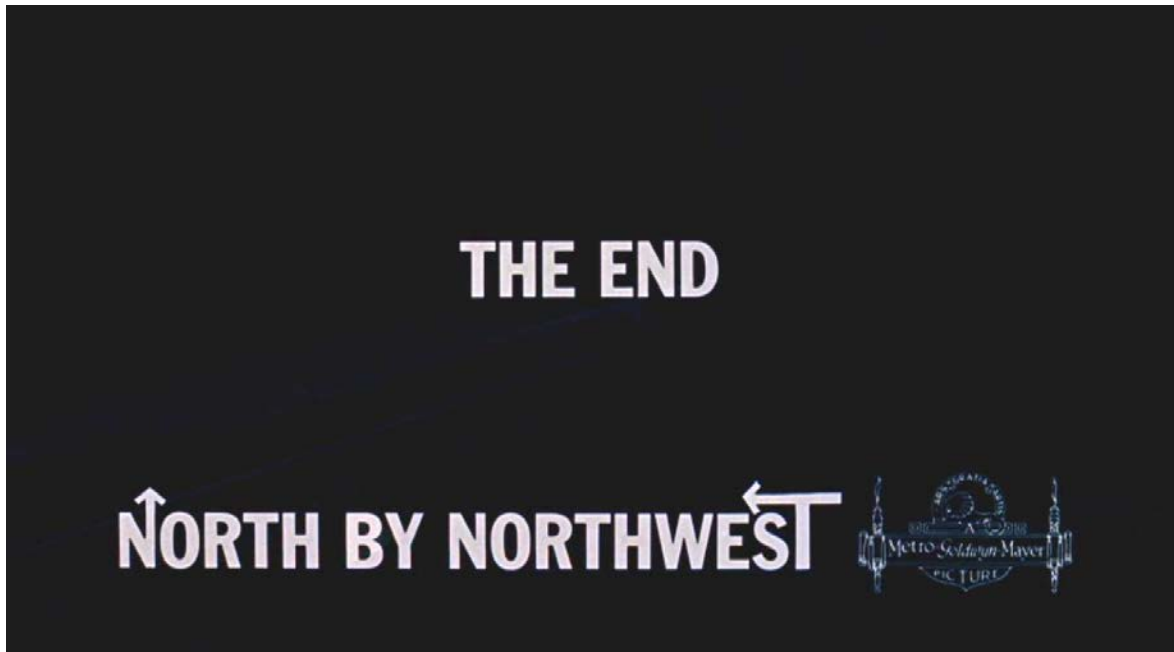
Four years before *North by Northwest*, in *The Trouble with Harry* [1955], Hitchcock makes a similar joke that seemed to go over peoples' heads. Miss Gravely is planning for a romantic visit from Captain Wiles and goes to the grocery to buy an appropriate coffee cup for her gentleman caller, a cup being only second to a purse in female genital symbolism. She asks the young and handsome Mr. Marlowe to try it by putting his finger into the handle to, "See how it fits." The big red coffee grinder right next to Miss Gravely certainly reinforces the sexual imagery. And, Miss Gravely's previously virginal attitude toward sex is commented on by the sign just behind the most feminine cup. Perhaps because she wants to now add something to her life, behind her is an appropriately misspelled sign, "No Addmitance." Since in *The Trouble with Harry* people did not get it, in *North by Northwest* perhaps Hitchcock decided to make everything bigger and far less subtle.



Torn Curtain [1966] (3:20)

Rather than ending a film with a bit of sexual humor, Hitchcock begins *Torn Curtain* [1966] with a rather subtle joke. We are introduced to a scientific conference with a sign, “Neutrino Collisions.” Immediately after, we see Sarah’s and Michael’s name tags for the “U.S. Interspace Committee.” Our next view is of the couple in bed under the covers having sex and suddenly “collisions” and “interspace” take on new meanings.

118. CONCLUSIONS



North by Northwest [1959] (2:16:11)

I strongly believe that *North by Northwest* forms an apex in the film career of Alfred Hitchcock. Even with his early silent films, Hitchcock seemed fascinated with the complexity of the medium, specifically how many layers of storytelling, visual and verbal, could he put into a film and still entertain a broad audience.

This is no mean feat, for with most filmmakers, complexity leads to obscurity, but Hitchcock never lost the power of sheer entertainment. A totally naive viewer, one who cares little for the art or complexity of film, would still enjoy most of Hitchcock's films. They are fun. They are interesting. They are exciting. And, most important, they are good stories well told. This is a constant with Hitchcock. However, there is something more going on in his films, as I have shown here – an intricacy of filmmaking rarely matched.

From *The Lodger* [1927] on (I'd argue with no one who would place the date even earlier), Hitchcock becomes fascinated with weaving a film like a carpet, challenging himself to make the most complex structures out of warp and woof that still seem to represent apparently straightforward stories. We can watch this complexity grow through his early British films like *Blackmail*

[1929] and *Sabotage* [1936]. With *Suspicion* [1941] and *Notorious* [1946] it becomes a fetish. With masterpieces like *Strangers on a Train* [1951], *Rear Window* [1954] and *Vertigo* [1958], his films become almost too complex to unravel in any cogent way. The internal and external cross-references and the layers of symbolism probably outnumber the individual shots that comprise the films. The number of social, cultural, psychological, and even filmic issues each film undertakes is staggering. *North by Northwest* becomes the apex of Hitchcock's mountain climbing exercise in film complexity. I hope my analysis has delved into at least a portion of the sub-textual content of this great film.

With *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock seems to have finally sated his taste for complexity. Or perhaps he could find no further ways to enhance the medium. In either case, after *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock seems to have turned to other issues. His films become simpler – simpler, that is, in terms of the complexity he defined for himself in his previous works. He turns to other issues in *Psycho* [1960] and *The Birds* [1963]. While many of the same techniques are there – symbolism, the use of backgrounds to define the characters' transient psychological states, seemingly trivial events presaging major points, complex characterization with non-linear psychological character growth, and so on – these become a background to issues like existential mysteries, transcendence of earth-bound human-ness, and the nature of nature itself and our place in it.

For these reasons, I believe that central to understanding the development of Alfred Hitchcock's film career is his masterpiece of complexity, *North by Northwest*.

119. BIBLIOGRAPHY

A few of the many books on Hitchcock:

- Allen, Richard and Gonzalès, S. Ishii, eds. *Alfred Hitchcock : Centenary Essays*. London: BFI Publishing, 1999
- Boccadoro, Patricia. "Hitchcock and Art in Paris." Culturekiosque Publications Ltd. 1996.
- Cavell, Stanley. *North by Northwest*. In "Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes." San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984.
- Cohen, Paula Marantz. *Alfred Hitchcock: The Legacy of Victorianism*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995.
- Durnat, Raymond. *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974.
- Hay, Peter *MGM : When the Lion Roars*, Turner Pub. Co., 1991.
- Hurley, Neil P. *Soul in Suspense: Hitchcock's Fright and Delight*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993.
- Jameson, Fredrick. *Reading Hitchcock*. In *October*, 12, Winter 1982, pg. 17-42.
- Krohn, Bill. *Hitchcock at Work*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2000.
- LaValley, Albert J. *Focus on Hitchcock*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972.
- Leitch, Thomas, and Leland Poague, *A Companion to Alfred Hitchcock*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell Pubs, 2011.
- Lesser, Wendy. *His Other Half: Men Looking at Women Through Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1991.
- Paini, Dominique, and Guy Cogeval, eds. *Hitchcock and Art: Fatal Coincidences*. Montreal: Mazzotta, 2000.
- Price, Theodore. *Hitchcock and Homosexuality*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992.
- Serritt, David. *The Films of Alfred Hitchcock*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Smith, Susan. *Hitchcock: Suspense, Humour and Tone*. London: British Film Institute, 2000
- Spoto, Donald. *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*. NY: Doubleday, 1976.
- Truffaut, François. *Hitchcock*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 1967.
- Wood, Robin. *Hitchcock's Films*. London: A. S. Barnes, 1969.

120. CHRONOLOGY

- 1925 – The Pleasure Garden (Gainsborough Pictures)
- 1926 – The Mountain Eagle (Fear o’ God) (Gainsborough Pictures)
- 1927 – The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog (Gainsborough Pictures)
- 1927 – The Ring (British International Pictures)
- 1927 – Downhill (When Boys Leave Home) (Gainsborough Pictures)
- 1928 – The Farmer’s Wife (British International Pictures)
- 1928 – Easy Virtue (Gainsborough Pictures)
- 1928 – Champagne (British International Pictures)
- 1929 – The Manxman (British International Pictures)
- 1929 – Blackmail (British International Pictures)
- 1929 – Juno and the Paycock (British International Pictures)
- 1930 – Murder! (British International Pictures)
- 1931 – The Skin Game (British International Pictures)
- 1931 – Rich and Strange (British International Pictures)
- 1932 – Number Seventeen (British International Pictures)
- 1934 – Waltzes from Vienna (Gaumont British Pictures Corporation)
- 1934 – The Man Who Knew Too Much (Gaumont British Pictures Corporation)
- 1935 – The 39 Steps (Gaumont British Pictures Corporation)
- 1936 – Secret Agent (Gaumont British Pictures Corporation)
- 1936 – Sabotage (Gaumont British Pictures Corporation)
- 1937 – Young and Innocent (Gaumont British Pictures Corporation)
- 1938 – The Lady Vanishes (Gainsborough Pictures)
- 1939 – Jamaica Inn (Mayflower Pictures Corporation)
- 1940 – Rebecca (Selznick International Pictures)
- 1940 – Foreign Correspondent (Walter Wanger Productions)
- 1941 – Mr. and Mrs. Smith (RKO Radio Pictures)
- 1941 – Suspicion (RKO Radio Pictures)
- 1942 – Saboteur (Universal Pictures)
- 1943 – Shadow of a Doubt (Universal Pictures)
- 1944 – Lifeboat (Twentieth Century Fox Film)
- 1944 – Bon Voyage (Ministry of Information)
- 1944 – Aventure Malagache (Ministry of Information)
- 1945 – Spellbound (Selznick International Pictures)
- 1946 – Notorious (RKO Radio Pictures)
- 1947 – The Paradine Case (Selznick Studio)
- 1948 – Rope (Warner Bros.)
- 1949 – Under Capricorn (Transatlantic Pictures)

1950 – Stage Fright (Warner Bros.)
1951 – Strangers on a Train (Warner Bros.)
1953 – I Confess (Warner Bros.)
1954 – Dial M for Murder (Warner Bros.)
1954 – Rear Window (Paramount Pictures)
1955 – To Catch a Thief (Paramount Pictures)
1955 – The Trouble with Harry (Paramount Pictures)
1956 – The Man Who Knew Too Much (Paramount Pictures)
1956 – The Wrong Man (Warner Bros.)
1958 – Vertigo (Paramount Pictures)
1959 – North by Northwest (Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer)
1960 – Psycho (Paramount Pictures)
1963 – The Birds (Universal Pictures)
1964 – Marnie (Universal Pictures)
1966 – Torn Curtain (Universal Pictures)
1969 – Topaz (Universal Pictures)
1972 – Frenzy (Universal Pictures)
1976 – Family Plot (Universal Pictures)

A note about the time codes and dates – both are approximate. There are often two release dates listed for the films, especially the early films: one for England and one for America. The time indications may vary from edition to edition. Again, this applies most to the early films where several versions are available.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank, Jerome Shapiro, Elizabeth Connolly, and John Upton for their advice, contributions, criticism, and suggestions, but mostly for their encouragement.

© Arthur Taussig, 1999 & 2020

Email: Taussig888@aol.com

Web Site: ArthurTaussig.com

All rights reserved.

License to Copy

This publication is intended for personal use only. Paper copies may be made for personal use. With this exception, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without prior permission in writing from the author. Reviewers may quote brief passages.